

## **TITLE PAGE AND DECLARATION**

# **The Trading Community of Exeter 1470-1570 with special reference to Merchants and Tailors.**

## **Volume 1 of 2**

Submitted by Paul Williams to the University of Exeter  
as a thesis for the degree of  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the history of Exeter between the late fifteenth and late sixteenth centuries, filling a gap between existing studies by Kowaleski and MacCaffrey. It provides a contrasting examination of the merchants and the tailors, the two most prominent occupations in the city. The research takes a multi-sourced approach drawing on local and national collections, many of which have been little studied before.

Following a critical account of the historical sources, a wider political, social and economic context is established. There is an examination of all Exeter's trades and crafts, of the minor guilds and the role of artisans in trade. The main body of the thesis then concentrates on the tailors and merchants, examining their guilds, working practices and trading activities. Detailed examination is made of the trade through the port of Exeter, and the role of Exeter merchants in the coastal trade and in other ports. The diversification of merchant wealth is considered. A detailed investigation of the Exeter Merchants' Company between 1558 and 1570 is finally provided.

This thesis concludes that Exeter was a more open community in the late fifteenth century than at the end of the period studied. Earlier, a range of occupations held political and economic power but by the 1520s, and more so by the 1560s, a merchant elite had taken control. This elite established a dominance over the overseas trade excluding both the city's artisans and merchants from other towns. Nonetheless it is clear that traders from towns within the trading community such as Topsham, Tiverton, and Taunton were important in creating Exeter's economic success before the mid sixteenth-century.

The elite extended their control over Exeter's guilds but power was contested by the tailors in particular. The tailors were a dynamic group from the late fifteenth century until the 1520s but had declined in importance before making their final challenge to the merchants in 1558/59. By the late 1550s the merchants were able to establish their own Merchants' Company. By then the artisans were largely excluded from the government and overseas trade, though change was slow and this was not fully achieved before 1570. The thesis also stresses that Exeter's economic stability rested on the vital efforts of a wide and successful

middling artisan group. Overall the contrasting fortunes of the merchants and the tailors show how social and economic divisions widened in the city across the period in focus.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Exeter City Council Act Book
BL	British Library, London
C1, C3.	Court of Chancery
CP	Court of Common Pleas
D and C	Exeter Cathedral Dean and Chapter Archives, Exeter
DCNQ	<i>Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries</i>
DCO	Duchy of Cornwall Office, London
DCRS	Devon and Cornwall Record Society
DEI	Devon and Exeter Institution, Exeter
DHC	Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter
ECA	Exeter City Archives
EcHR	<i>Economic History Review</i>
	<i>Exeter Freeman</i> M.M.Rowe and A.M.Jackson ed. <i>Exeter Freeman 1266-1967</i> , Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1973
MCR	Exeter Mayor's Court Rolls
Prob 11	Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Probate, Wills
RAMM	Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter
Req	Court of Requests
RR/RA	Exeter City Receiver's Accounts/Records
STAC	Court of Star Chamber
SHC	Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton
TAB	Exeter Tailors' Guild Act Book
TC	Town Customs
TDA	<i>Transactions of the Devonshire Association</i>
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, London
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>



*Tudor Exeter* M.M Rowe ed. *Tudor Exeter: Tax Assessments 1489-1595 including the Military Survey 1522*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1977

WCSL      West Country Studies Library, in Devon Heritage Centre

WDRO      West Devon and Plymouth Record Office, Plymouth

## INTRODUCTION

### Research Aims and Arguments

An overall aim of the thesis is to fill the chronological gap in the history of the city of Exeter which exists between the work of Kowaleski, which focuses on the late fourteenth century, and that of MacCaffrey, which concentrates on the Elizabethan and early Stuart period.<sup>1</sup>

A further aim is to focus on the trading community itself and to provide a detailed examination of the people who were the overseas and coastal traders and leading artisans at the time. The Exeter merchants in the later Elizabethan period have been studied by Hoskins and MacCaffrey, but no detailed investigation has yet been undertaken of their early Tudor predecessors.<sup>2</sup> There is an examination of the working lives and aspects of the businesses of the merchants. Also there is some study of the wider trading community and role of traders from other towns in the port.

The extensive extant records for the city provide much information on Exeter's artisans. There has been little exploration of them as a group in this period, so the work here aims to address this. The few more recent studies of crafts groups within Exeter have focussed on individual occupations such as the pewterers, goldsmiths and the wood trades.<sup>3</sup>

The thesis looks at the relationships between the merchant elite and the city artisans and aims to discover more about the lives of the latter. The study of Exeter guilds has been dominated by Youngs' work on the weavers, tuckers

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<sup>1</sup> M. Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter*, Cambridge, 1995, as well as a number of significant articles on Exeter's history. W.T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540-1640-The Growth of an English County Town*, Harvard, 1958, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. More recently K. Osborne in her thesis 'Illuminating the Chorus in the Shadows: Elizabethan and Jacobean Exeter 1550-1610', University of Exeter Ph.D., 2016 has focussed on the 'middling' and 'poorer' sorts in the earlier part of the period identified by MacCaffrey and challenged many of his arguments.

<sup>2</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*; W.G. Hoskins, 'The Elizabethan Merchants of Exeter' in S.T. Bindoff, J. Hurstfield and C.H. Williams, ed., *Elizabethan Government and Society*, London, 1961, pp.163-187.

<sup>3</sup> R. Homer, 'Exeter Pewterers from the Fourteenth Century to about 1750', *TDA*, 127, 1995, pp. 57-80; S. Flavin, 'The Decorative Arts: Change and Development in the Sixteenth Century' in S. Smiles, ed., *West Country to World's End: The South West in the Tudor Age*, Exeter, 2015; J. Allan, 'Breton Woodworkers in the Immigrant Communities of South-West England 1500-1550', *Post Medieval Archaeology*, 48/2, 2014, pp.320-356.

and shearmen.<sup>4</sup> In this thesis an aim is to look especially closely at the tailors, who in the years from 1470 to 1570, were always the second most important economic group in Exeter after the merchants. The survival of the records of the Tailors' guild, which have been little studied by historians, has helped greatly. A further aim is to examine the working lives of the tailors as fully as possible. The Exeter crafts and trades, along with the surviving evidence of their guilds, will also be explored to provide a wider economic picture of the city.

A merchant dominated oligarchy was re-established in Exeter during this period. An aim is to examine the nature of it and also how this came about. A detailed exploration of the means used by the elite to re-establish the extent of control that they had previously held at the end of the fourteenth century is possible for Exeter due to the wealth of the survival of its records. The study analyses the tools and agencies which the city elite used to assert their power. It also seeks to relate this to the urban context in which this happened and through the exploration of the history of Exeter make a contribution to the economic and social history of the period.

The later decades of the fifteenth century and the earlier ones of the sixteenth century have been viewed by some historians as seeing the 'triumph of oligarchy' in English towns.<sup>5</sup> Other historians have viewed this as a time when power in the towns was more contested.<sup>6</sup> The thesis contends that Exeter was a more open, broad based community in the late fifteenth century when people with a range of occupations held more political and economic power in the city. This was evident in the composition of the city council, the membership of the city freedom, participation in overseas trade and the standing of some of the guilds within the city, especially the tailors. By the mid-sixteenth century a merchant-dominated elite based on wealth and on occupation was controlling Exeter. However, it was not the narrow one based on families which existed in the later Elizabethan years.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Youings, *Tuckers Hall, Exeter: the History of a Provincial Company Through Five Centuries*, Exeter, 1968.

<sup>5</sup> S. Rigby, 'Urban Oligarchy in Late Medieval England' in J.A.F. Thomson, ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, Gloucester, 1988, pp.62-86 and S. Rigby (with E. Ewan,) 'Government, Power and Authority 1300-1540' in D. Palliser, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume 1, 600-1540*, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 291-312.

<sup>6</sup> C. Liddy, *Contesting the City: The Politics of Citizenship in English Towns 1250-1530*, Oxford, 2017.

The means used by the oligarchy to assert control focused on three key areas. Firstly, their establishment of a dominance over the overseas and coastal trade which excluded both the city's artisans and citizens from other towns such as Topsham, Taunton and Tiverton from participating in it.<sup>7</sup> Secondly, the elite extended their control over the city guilds as they became bodies more concerned with economic regulation. Only the tailors, and also briefly the cordwainers, provided any opposition. Finally, the oligarchy which dominated the city council used means such as a system of shop fines to control the economic layer immediately below the city freemen and increasingly the freedom itself. By the late 1550s the merchants were able to establish their own Merchants' Company whose membership largely corresponded with the membership of the city council and also represented the major traders recorded in the customs accounts as trading through the port. The artisans were mostly excluded from the city's government and overseas trade. This thesis contends, however, that the Merchants' Company did not fully succeed in excluding non-members or artisans from overseas trade before 1570. Change was slow and the true re-emergence of a full merchant domination over the city was to be a few decades later. In its first decades the Company was not as grandiose and the merchants not as powerful as presented by Cotton, MacCaffrey and Hoskins.<sup>8</sup> They were to be more powerful in the later Elizabethan years.

The merchants and the tailors were at the centre of the change from a wider power base in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, when Exeter's tailors were the craft group who had the most participation in city government and overseas trade, to the mid sixteenth century when the tailors made a last attempt to retain their position by leading craft opposition to the setting up of the Merchants' Company. This challenge showed that by the 1550s they were far less powerful than they had been in the 1470s and 80s.

The contrasting fortunes of the merchants and the tailors serve to exemplify the extent to which divisions were widening between the merchants and the other

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<sup>7</sup> P. Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth: The Story of the Town's Woollen Trade 1475-1815*, Exeter, 2018 has recently argued that the Tiverton merchants and clothiers were themselves moving away to seek new trading opportunities, especially in London from the 1530s to the 1570s.

<sup>8</sup> W. Cotton, *An Elizabethan Guild of the City of Exeter: An Account of the Proceedings of the Society of Merchant Adventurers During the Latter Half of the Sixteenth Century*, Exeter, 1873; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.136-159; Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants' which presents a picture of the 'richer merchants' living in 'considerable state'.

craftsmen in Exeter. The thesis, however, goes beyond the study of the tailors to consider other occupations such as the trades and crafts which made up the freemen ranks and those who were paying shop fines more frequently. It confirms that Exeter was stable economically throughout the period and that its prosperity rested on trade expansion but also on the economic contribution of a substantial middling group of citizens. In examining trade expansion it rests on, and furthers, the research of Carus Wilson.<sup>9</sup> Overall the thesis offers a rounded picture of Exeter's trading community in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries which can be compared with similar studies of York, Norwich and Worcester whilst exploiting the particular strengths of Exeter's sources

## **Methodology**

This study was undertaken in two phases: initially under the supervision of Professor Joyce Youings and secondly under that of Professors Jane Whittle and Jonathan Barry. The initial area of investigation comprised the port, trade and urban community but in the second phase this was re-aligned to a detailed focus on the trading community. The trading community is defined here as the people who were the overseas and coastal traders and the artisans working in Exeter in the period studied. However, the trading community using the port of Exeter also included prominent men from Topsham, Taunton, Tiverton, Cullompton and a range of other ports and creeks so their role and importance has been assessed here in relation to that of the Exeter men. The study was originally planned to cover the years from 1500 to 1570 but this was extended backwards in time to include the decades from 1470. This provided a greater opportunity to describe and explain the different phases and changes experienced in Exeter during the early Tudor period.

The Exeter men were primarily those who lived in the intramural parishes within the 17 city parishes. However, the city also included extramural St Sidwell and St Edmund, which were integral to the community, even though they only became part of the county of the city proper in 1550. The lives of traders from other towns were explored in so far as they were involved in Exeter's trade or had other connections to Exeter.

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<sup>9</sup> E.M. Carus Wilson, *The Expansion of Exeter at the Close of the Middle Ages*, Harte Lecture, University of Exeter, Exeter, 1963.

Both phases of the research involved consulting documents at archives in Exeter and London. In the initial phase the particulars of customs accounts and the port books were transcribed in the National Archives in London and some microfilm copies of particulars of customs were also studied. Other major series of records researched then were primarily those of Chancery, Star Chamber, Requests and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Exploration was also made of the British Library holdings. At the Devon Heritage Centre the major collections of documents explored were the Town Customs, the city Act Books, Receivers' accounts, the works of John Hooker, the Merchants' Company records and some of the relevant miscellaneous records of the Exeter City Archives collection. Other Devon collections explored included deeds, churchwardens' accounts and parish registers and items in the Exeter Cathedral Archives and the West Devon Record Office.

In the second phase of research at the National Archives in London, the concentration was on completing any evident gaps in the study of the particulars of customs accounts and also, within these records, tracing the activities of Exeter traders in other ports or through classes of records such as the aulnage accounts and the lay subsidies. At the Devon Heritage Centre the second phase involved a more extensive study of the records of the Tailors' guild and the Exeter shop fines records. Other sources were used such as the Tiverton Tenth of 1488. Additional archives consulted included the Duchy of Cornwall Office in London and the Somerset Heritage Centre in Taunton. Digitised records were available notably those of the Court of Common Pleas, made available by the AALT project directed by the University of Houston.<sup>10</sup> Other indexes were also explored, most notably that of the research of Sue Reece on Exeter deeds and leases 1450-1600, deposited at RAMM.

The approaches to the research were influenced primarily by the major and most important comparable urban histories of the period such as Palliser on York, Pound on Norwich, Phythian-Adams on Coventry and Dyer on

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<sup>10</sup> [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/CP40_Indices.html)

Worcester<sup>11</sup> and later by those written by Mayhew on Rye, Sacks on Bristol and Amor on Ipswich.<sup>12</sup>

The approach adopted in this study has been one of 'individual reconstitution' as presented by Macfarlane for his reconstruction of historical communities<sup>13</sup> and 'nominal record linkage' as presented by Wrigley.<sup>14</sup> The method has been one of record linkage centred on Exeter's traders and leading artisans. In studying a large town it was not been possible to examine every record that survives for a set of given individuals but as wide a range of types of sources as possible was selected to give as full an insight into their lives as could be achieved. The records for this period were abundant enough for reconstitutions, as Wrigley suggests.<sup>15</sup>

In the first phase a central card index-based database was established which has been added to during the later research. This methodology was adopted before the widespread availability of electronic ones. Files were established for individuals and to date this covers over 2,000 persons. The starting point was all the laity included in the Military Survey of 1522. Individual card records were created for each individual, to which data from other key records was added. The other central records used in this initial phase were the lay subsidies of 1524/5, 1544 and 1557. Individuals from the Tenth of 1489 were subsequently included. Also added were the city officials, officers for all guilds, will references, freedom entries, shop fine payers, references to individuals in the city Act Books, a number of Exeter Deeds entries, John Hooker's biographies, cases in the central equity courts, material from secondary MP biographies, references to depositions in the Merchant Company's dispute, Vivian's visitation records, State Paper references such as Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, Inquisition Post Mortem references and the recording of when individuals held offices such as churchwardens and as wardens of Exe Bridge, the Staple and

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<sup>11</sup> D. Palliser, *Tudor York*, Oxford, 1979; J. Pound, *Tudor and Stuart Norwich*, Chichester, 1988; C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1979; A. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century*, Leicester, 1973.

<sup>12</sup> G. Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, University of Sussex, 1987; D. Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy 1450-1700*, Berkeley, 1991; N.R. Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich: Trade and Industry*, Woodbridge, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> A. Macfarlane, *Reconstructing Historical Communities*, Cambridge, 1977, pp.36-37.

<sup>14</sup> E.A. Wrigley, *Identifying People in the Past*, London, 1973, pp.1-16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

the Magdalen. Some files contain multiple entries which in themselves could serve as the basis for subsequent biographical studies. The database does not include individual entries of traders bringing goods in and out of the port as recorded in the customs accounts as not all of these people were Exeter-based. Also this would have been taken a good deal of time. Kowaleski felt that keeping all references to individuals would fully require 'an army of researchers,' which she highlighted in her study of Medieval Exeter.<sup>16</sup> Macfarlane also noted that a 'total reconstitution' (using all the available records) of the lives of individuals requires too much time.<sup>17</sup> The approach here has not been a prosopographical one, therefore, though in examining a strata of Exeter's society it employs a micro-history approach through an intensive study of the documentary material focusing on a city's trading community and the interaction of its elite with the rest of its population.<sup>18</sup> A prosopographical approach would have required the use of the extensive borough court records, such as the Mayor's Court rolls, to follow the lives of the Exeter men and women in the manner in which Kowaleski used them for seven of the ten prosopographical analyses contained within her study.<sup>19</sup> Other records which were not included here in full were the business of the Exeter guild and some deed references.

The study of the customs accounts was the other major approach using the indexes available from the National Archives to select the records. Initial examinations were made of the transcripts of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth century Exeter customs accounts by Touchard and of two manuscript transcripts by Coleman. A range of published customs accounts were also consulted.<sup>20</sup> Then Exeter particulars of account, certificate books and port

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<sup>16</sup> Kowaleski *Local Markets*, pp. 336-37.

<sup>17</sup> Macfarlane, *Reconstructing Historical Communities*, pp. 208-214 His comments related to a relatively small parish over 300 years where he thought 'total reconstitution' would take a single researcher over 20 years.

<sup>18</sup> K. Verboden, M. Caulier and J. Dumolyn, 'A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography' in K.S.B. Keats-Rohans, ed. *Prosopography Approaches and Applications: A Handbook*, Oxford, 2007, pp.37-70 at pp.38,41; G. Levi, 'On Microhistory' in P. Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Cambridge, 2001, pp.93-113, at 99.

<sup>19</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.334-335.

<sup>20</sup> H. Touchard, 'Les Douanes Municipales d'Exeter (Devon) Publication des Roles de 1381 a 1433', These complementaire pour Doctorate des Lettres presente par Henri Touchard, Universite de Paris, Faculte des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, undated. 1967; O. Coleman, 'Transcripts of Exeter-Dartmouth-Barnstaple-Ilfracombe Customs accounts for 1498/99 and 1502/03', London School of Economics, not dated. The most useful were W.R. Childs, *The*



books were transcribed. The process was checked and completed and the accounts of some other ports examined for Exeter traders in the second phase of study. As Childs has written: 'The lists of merchants' names are themselves invaluable original source material for analyses of individual careers and of the commercial activities of the merchant communities'.<sup>21</sup> A sample of the customs accounts was then chosen to explore the composition of the Exeter trading community in more depth across the whole period. This consisted of 17 selected Town Customs accounts and 31 national customs accounts. They covered pairs of decades from the 1470s and 80s up to the 1550s and 60s and attempted as even coverage as possible, though this was less feasible for the time when Town Customs survive in small numbers, especially in the 1510s and 20s. The selection of the sample took into account where we have extant national customs accounts and Town Customs accounts for the same year, as this allows us to have the most complete picture. A further consideration has also been to use accounts, where they are available, which cover complete calendar years. It was important to have full coverage of the boom at the start of the period and equally to be able to make detailed analysis of the period at the end when we have lists of the members of the Exeter Merchants' Company (the most useful lists are for 1560 and 1570) and to use some post 1565 Port Book material as this provides the greatest detail within the national customs accounts.

The selected sample of customs accounts was analysed to calculate the volume of trade and the number of shipments made by individual merchants in the chosen years. The value of goods traded was calculated from the particulars of accounts, which give contemporary valuations for the majority of commodities.<sup>22</sup> The number of shipments made by each merchant in a year was calculated from the Town Customs. Tables of principal merchants for each year

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*Customs Accounts of Hull 1453-1490*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 144, 1984; B. Dietz, *The Port and Trade of Early Elizabethan London*, London Record Society, 8, 1972; S. Flavin and E.T. Jones, *Bristol's Trade with Ireland and the Continent 1505-1601: the evidence of the Exchequer Customs Accounts*, Bristol Record Society, 61, 2009; J. Vanes, *Documents Illustrating the Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, Bristol Record Society, 39, 1979; K.P. Wilson, *Chester Customs Accounts 1301-1566*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 3, 1969.

<sup>21</sup> Childs, *Customs Accounts of Hull*, p. xxiii.

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix 1

were produced and compared.<sup>23</sup> Only for the post-1565 port books, when ports of embarkation and destination are given, was it possible to analyse the direction of trade. The mid -century certificate books were also analysed in this manner as they often give ports of destination for the coastal trade, as do post-1565 coastal port books. Attempts were made to link all traders with a place of residence. These are sometimes given in the customs accounts, especially in the Town Customs. Comparative tables of the places of residence of merchants at key points in the time period were also produced. Customs accounts for a sample of other ports notably Dartmouth, Bridgwater, Lyme and Plymouth, and also the extant Water Bailiffs accounts of Dartmouth and Bridgwater, were searched for evidence of trading by Exeter men.

During the second phase of research a small electronic database of occupations in Exeter was established from the Common Pleas records. The court required that the occupation of defendants was to be given, making a more systematic study possible than for other court records where occupational data was not so clearly recorded. The first year of the case being heard, the name of the Exeter defendant and the occupation or occupations given, were entered. The places of residence for extramural or partly extramural parishes especially were often given. The range of documents studied in the research has also allowed a further methodology, namely the testing of one set of documents by comparison and connection with another. For example the existence of the series of Exeter shop fines and the information they contain on men entering the freedom has made it possible to test the freedom records. An examination was made of all the men who were marked as 'lib' within the shop fine lists which survive dating from 1512 to 1542. They were clearly identified as not having to pay shop fines because they had already become city freemen. Comparisons were also made with the guild records. Membership lists survive for this period for the guilds of the tailors, the merchants, and the weavers, tuckers and shearmen. The fullest material is available for the tailors. Lists of members of the tailors' guild from 1482, 1520, 1559 and 1564 were compared with the freemen's records. In studying occupations as many sources as possible were used to provide an approach far wider than just analysing the freemen's records.

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<sup>23</sup> See Appendix 1.

This study involved the nominal record linkage of a greater range of records than has been attempted previously for Exeter in this period. This led to the cross-referencing of collections of documents and extensive work on the extant customs accounts. Some original approaches have included the discovery and analysis of the shop fines records, which had not been studied before. Also a rigorous testing of the freemen's records has been undertaken involving comparison with the shop fine records and the Common Pleas data. The Common Pleas records have hardly been used for Exeter and the AALT's digitisation of them has made this much more possible now. There has been a deeper probe into the city hierarchy by using series such as the wardens of Exe Bridge accounts as well as under-used guild records. All of the methodologies have served to progress our understanding of Exeter's history in this period.

### **Historiographical Context**

Phythian- Adams saw Exeter as 'the only unambiguous example of urban success' in late medieval England and the reasons for this are worth further investigation.<sup>24</sup> Kowaleski presented the existence of a merchant-dominated oligarchy in the late-fourteenth century presiding over a city which was at the dynamic centre of a prospering regional economic network.<sup>25</sup> Exeter escaped from many of the problems which faced struggling towns in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth century. To a large extent Exeter also avoided the economic slump of the mid-fifteenth century, although the disruption of the French trade must have dealt a blow. It was, however, after 1475 that the city experienced an unprecedented period of economic expansion in its overseas trade which lasted until at least the end of the first decade of the sixteenth century. This trading expansion was identified and studied by Carus Wilson and subsequently by Childs.<sup>26</sup> The slowing of this trade by the mid-sixteenth century has been discussed by Youings, though she sees renewed expansion thereafter, which was to serve as the basis for the continued growth in the early Stuart period,

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<sup>24</sup> Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*; 'The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century' *Medieval Studies*, 46, 1984, pp.355-384.

<sup>26</sup> Carus Wilson, *Expansion of Exeter*; W.R. Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade in the Late Middle Ages' in M. Duffy et.al., ed. *The New Maritime History of Devon, Volume 1*, London, 1993, pp. 79-89.

outlined by Stephens.<sup>27</sup> The early Tudor expansion of Exeter needs to be tied to the growing prosperity of its surrounding region. Exeter experienced some of the trade difficulties caused by involvement in wars such as in the 1520s and the 1540s, and less is known of the town's fortunes in the 1550s, but the overriding impression of its economic fortunes is one of relative stability. Exeter is consistently placed as the fourth or fifth highest ranking provincial town in England behind Norwich, Bristol, and York in the Tudor period.

MacCaffrey's study of Exeter in the period from 1540 to 1640 primarily concentrated on developments in the scope and controls of the city government in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods.<sup>28</sup> First published in 1958, it is an extensive study of the operation of urban government in the later-sixteenth century but is not comprehensive in its coverage of trade.<sup>29</sup>

More recent studies of Exeter have focussed on the city's relations with royal government in the fifteenth century compared to that with other cities and also its role in the Wars of the Roses.<sup>30</sup> Other work by Orme has focussed on its religious history and rebellion in particular.<sup>31</sup> Stoye has thrown much light on sixteenth century Exeter through his studies of Exeter's walls and its water supply as well as the 1549 rebellions and witchcraft.<sup>32</sup> Brodie and also Evans have provided more understanding of poverty and philanthropy in Exeter in the 1560s and 1570s and in the years from 1560 to 1625.<sup>33</sup> Osborne's thesis has

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<sup>27</sup> J. Youngs, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade in Sixteenth Century Devon' in Duffy et.al. *New Maritime History*, p.199; W.B. Stephens, *Seventeenth-Century Exeter: A Study of Industrial and Commercial Development 1625-1688*, Exeter, 1958.

<sup>28</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*.

<sup>29</sup> For instance it makes limited use of customs accounts: MacCaffrey analysed only six port books in detail, dating from 1611 to 1638. *ibid.*, p170 and pp.167-173.

<sup>30</sup> L. Attreed, *The King's Towns: Identity and Survival in the Late Medieval English Boroughs*, New York, 2001; H. Kleineke, "'The Kynges Cite': Exeter and the War of The Roses' in L.Clark, ed., *Conflict, Consequences and the Crown in the Late Middle Ages*, Woodbridge, 2007, pp.137-156 '.

<sup>31</sup> N. Orme including *The Churches of Medieval Exeter*, Exeter, 2014 and *The Cap and the Sword: Exeter and the Rebellions of 1497*, Exeter, 1997.

<sup>32</sup> M. Stoye, *Circled With Stone: Exeter's City Walls 1485-1660*, Exeter, 2003; *id.*, *Water in the City: The Aqueducts and Underground Passages of Exeter*, Exeter, 2014; *id.*, *Witchcraft in Exeter 1558-1660*, Exeter, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> N.D. Brodie, "'The Names of All the Poor People': Corporate and Parish Relief in Exeter, 1560s-1570s' in A.M.Scott ed., *Experiences of Poverty in Late Medieval and Early Modern England and France*, Farnham, 2012, pp. 107-132; C.S. Evans, "'An Echo of the Multitude'": the Intersection of Governmental and Private Property Initiatives in Early Modern Exeter', *Albion*, 32, 3,2000, pp.408-428.

added further insights into those outside the city elite in the period after 1550.<sup>34</sup> The present thesis contributes to the wider economic and social study of Exeter in the chosen period and complements all this valuable work. Reference to the position of developments in Exeter within the wider historical literature is made within the individual chapters of the thesis.

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<sup>34</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus'.

## CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL SOURCES

This chapter provides a critical discussion of the main sources used in the research for the thesis. These were: the records compiled by John Hooker, the city chamberlain; a range of national and local customs accounts; the city Act Books, freemen's records, shop fines and guild records held in Exeter; taxation and probate records in the local and national archives and court records, mainly those held centrally. The research draws upon the rich survival of the Exeter City archives and links them with a number of records in other repositories, mostly held in collections at the National Archives in London. A major aim was to examine and integrate the sources for trading and for urban history.

### 1.1 The Exeter City Archives and the Records of John Hooker

The Exeter City Archives held at the Devon Heritage Centre contain a very full range of historical sources which was most clearly identified in the HMC Report published in 1916.<sup>35</sup> Originally this collection rested upon the work of John Hooker (alias Vowell) as city chamberlain from 1555 until his death in 1601.<sup>36</sup> Hooker recorded and wrote a great deal about the city. His 'Description of the Citie of Excester' is the most well-known work and was edited and published by the Devon and Cornwall Record Society between 1919 and 1947.<sup>37</sup> Also important is Hooker's 'Commonplace Book' or 'Annals,' Book 51 in the Exeter City Archives. The original manuscript was consulted, though the work has been edited and published in 2005.<sup>38</sup> It provides biographical sketches of many of the mayors of Exeter during the period studied as well as comments on the major events in the city's history.

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<sup>35</sup> *HMC Report on the Records of the City of Exeter*, London, 1916. Now available on-line at: [www.babel.hathitrust.org](http://www.babel.hathitrust.org) (University of Indiana).

<sup>36</sup> An account of the development of the Exeter City Archives has been published in T. Gray, ed., *Devon Parish Taxpayers 1500-1650, Volume 2, From Bere Ferrers to Chudleigh*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, new series, 59, 2016, pp.3-10. Also B. Carpenter, ed. *Ten Centuries of Devon Archives: An Exhibition in Exeter Guildhall*, May, 2002, Friends of Devon Archives, 2002.

<sup>37</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 52; W.J. Harte, J.W. Schlopp & H. Tapley-Soper ed. *The Description of the Citie of Excester by John Vowell alias Hoker*, DCRS, old series, 12, 1919-1947, 3 Vols. It was completed in four editions probably in 1559, 1571, 1587 and 1600. This is discussed by Q.E. Deakin, 'John Hooker's Description of Excester: a comparison of the manuscripts', *DCNQ*, 34, 6, Autumn, 1980, pp.229-236.

<sup>38</sup> T. Gray, ed., *The Chronicle of Exeter 1205-1722*, Exeter, 2005.

Hooker's role within the city was extensive.<sup>39</sup> This led him to compile a number of other documents, some of which have also been used. His Waste Book contains records of the Town Custom from 1556 to 1565 and records of the Admiralty courts held in Devon in 1566 and 1569 as well as much miscellaneous material.<sup>40</sup> He played a major role in the establishment and organisation of the Orphans' Court in Exeter, for which much material survives.<sup>41</sup> Hooker also recorded the dispute concerning the formation of the Merchants' Company in Exeter and collected much of the surviving documentation concerning this.<sup>42</sup> He copied, translated and composed other civic documents including histories of city-held local manors, books of accounts associated with some of the other offices and actions such as the bailiffship of Exe Island and city corn purchases.<sup>43</sup> The study of Exeter has been extended and contextualised by the use of his work on Devon, his 'Synopsis Chorographical'.

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The calendar compiled by Stuart Moore in the years from 1863 to 1870 is a first point of entry into unlocking the Exeter City Archives today. It is available in the search room at the Devon Heritage Centre. This should be preceded by a detailed perusal of the HMC Report of 1916.<sup>45</sup> Much destruction was ultimately to come through the German bombing of Exeter in 1942, which led to the loss of some city records. Later archivists have transcribed, translated and edited some key sources and published them, with the support of the Devon and Cornwall Record Society, in more recent years. In particular, the Exeter taxation records,

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<sup>39</sup> As well as serving as the chamberlain, with all his attendant duties, he was the city's MP twice, bailiff for three of the city's manors, collected and organised the Town Custom, supervised the Orphans' Court, was a judge of the Devon vice-admiralty court twice, a coroner, and supervised city buildings, rents and wage rates.

<sup>40</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 57.

<sup>41</sup> C. Carlton, 'John Hooker and Exeter's Court of Orphans,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 36:4, 1972, pp.307-316.; id., *The Court of Orphans*, Leicester, 1974.

<sup>42</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185.

<sup>43</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 183, John Hooker's Book of Accounts as Bailiff of Exe Island, St John's and St Nicholas 1556-1585 contains a valuable survey of Exe Island in 1562; Book 60h John Hooker's Notes on the History of Exe Island. Book 229 Book of City Corn Purchases 1562 lists the individuals and guilds which contributed to the purchase of grain at this time of need and therefore gives us an insight into the city's upper echelons at this time.

<sup>44</sup> John Hooker, 'Synopsis Chorographical of Devonshire', British Library, Harleian MS 5872; DHC, ECA, MS11 (Berry Pomeroy).

<sup>45</sup> DHC, ECA, Stuart A. Moore, *Calendar of the Records and Muniments belonging to the Corporation and City of Exeter*, in DHC 1863-1870 ; Gray, ed. *Devon Parish Taxpayers*, pp.5-6.

edited by Rowe, and the Exeter Freeman records, edited by Rowe and Jackson are of paramount importance.<sup>46</sup>

## 1.2 Archives Outside Exeter

The National Archives include some important series of records for the study. Other archives were consulted including the West Devon Record Office in Plymouth, the Somerset Heritage Centre in Taunton and, in London, the Duchy of Cornwall Office and the British Library. An attempt was maintained to retain the balance of using both locally held records and ones in national collections. The central chapters drew on major sources from each.

## 1.3 Customs Accounts

### *Particulars of Customs Accounts*

A major source for the study of Exeter's overseas trade is the Particulars of Customs Accounts (E122) in the National Archives. Fifty eight Particulars of Customs for Exeter were studied, covering the period from 1470 to 1570, of which over half emanate from the reign of Henry VIII. They consist of seven accounts from the reign of Edward IV, none from the brief reign of Richard III and ten accounts from the reign of Henry VII. There are 31 accounts from the reign of Henry VIII, three each from the reigns of Edward VI and Mary and four from the first decade of Elizabeth I's rule. The account rolls were compiled by customs officials in the port who sent their returns to the London Exchequer for auditing. Their full title is 'Particulars and Controlment or Ledger rolls' but are all generally referred to as Particulars of Account. Little has been published from these accounts, though Whitley did provide a partial transcript of one for 1494/95 in 1912.<sup>47</sup> Some sampling was done of Dartmouth, Lyme, Bridgwater and Plymouth accounts to investigate the extent to which Exeter merchants were trading through other ports.

The customs accounts provide detailed information about the trading activities of individual merchants. The Particulars contain the name of the ship and its

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<sup>46</sup> M.M. Rowe, ed. *Tudor Exeter: Tax Assessments 1489-1595 including the Military Survey 1522*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 22, 1977 (hereafter *Tudor Exeter*); M.M. Rowe and A.M. Jackson, ed. *Exeter Freeman 1266-1967*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, extra series 1, Exeter, 1973. (Hereafter: *Exeter Freeman*).

<sup>47</sup> H.G. Whitley, 'The Maritime Trade of Exeter in Medieval Times,' *TDA*, 44, 1912, pp.530-546.



master with its 'place of connection', (the place given as being associated with the ship) the names of the merchants shipping goods in the vessel, the cargoes, the value of the goods, the custom paid and the date of the arrival or embarkation of the ship (or of the payment of the customs due). The records provide a rich source for examining the trading of individual merchants and groups of merchants.

The main inescapable limitation of these accounts is that they do not give a port of embarkation or destination and therefore our knowledge of the direction of trade can only be approximate. An overview of the drawbacks of customs accounts and the 'problem' of smuggling has been provided by Jones in his study of sixteenth century Bristol.<sup>48</sup> He concludes that '...it seems likely that smuggling formed an important and growing component of England's overseas trade as the (sixteenth) century progressed'.<sup>49</sup> The accounts cannot give us a full picture of trading activities, as Childs has emphasised 'they are tax returns not trade returns'.<sup>50</sup> She has also concluded that '...problems of negligence, corruption, evasion and smuggling are more troublesome to deal with, but on balance they do not seem to invalidate the use of the accounts'.<sup>51</sup> Although the limitations of the accounts must be acknowledged, the consensus is that they give a more accurate picture for the earlier period and their reliability decreases in the later sixteenth century. The present research has not revealed many instances of concern about the activities of the customs officials or the veracity of these records for the earlier years.<sup>52</sup> Despite the unreliability of customs valuations and duties these were relatively low in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and it was only really from the 1560s that smuggling and evasion became more lucrative. This thesis does not attempt to study the trade statistics but concentrates on the respective roles of merchants and artisans and Exeter traders and men from other towns in the development of trading activities.

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<sup>48</sup> E.T. Jones, *Inside the Illicit Economy: Reconstructing the Smugglers' Trade of Sixteenth Century Bristol*, London, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.223.

<sup>50</sup> W.R. Childs, 'Medieval Sources -A Preliminary Survey' in D. Starkey, ed., *Sources for a New Maritime History of Devon*, Exeter, 1987, p.45.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

<sup>52</sup> TNA, E122/95/1 A case was brought against the customs official Thomas Gale in 1442 but this concerned his trading on his own account whilst he was a customs official, which was not legally permitted.

## *Port Books*

The main sources for the study of trade after Easter 1565 are the Port Books in the National Archives.<sup>53</sup> There is a good rate of survival for the Exeter Port Books, though they are only of use for this study for the first four years after their inception. Four Searchers' Port Book accounts survive covering the period from September 1566 to September 1570. The accounts of these officials have been seen as the most detailed and reliable.<sup>54</sup> The first Customers' Port Book, introduced at Easter 1565, records trade up until September of that year. There is also a Customer and Controller's Coastal Port Book for 1565 and two for 1569/70. Coastal trading is included in three of the Overseas Port Books extant for the years before 1570. These records provided ample material to assess the nature of the trading activities through the port of Exeter at the end of the period studied. The Port Books provide a port of destination or embarkation and are therefore more useful in recording the direction of trade than the Particulars of Customs accounts. This has led to 1565 being a starting point used by historians studying overseas and coastal trade. The Exeter Port Books are generally in a better condition than the Particulars of Account and there are few gaps covering the years studied.<sup>55</sup>

A commission was granted to Sir Gawen Carew to examine the difference 'betwene the quantity of wyne landed at the porte of Exeter and the entry therof in the customs booke' between September 1575 and June 1576.<sup>56</sup> This supports Jones' view that wine was one of the key commodities where customs duties were evaded although these offences occurred beyond the time period of this study but they serve as a warning about the reliability of the Port Books.

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<sup>53</sup> TNA, E190 series.

<sup>54</sup> A. Grant, 'Port Books as a Source for the Maritime History of Devon,' in D. Starkey ed. *Sources*, Exeter 1987, p. 57.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, E190/ 925/6, 925/7, 925/14, 926/1, 926/9, 927/3, 927/7, 927/11. The Port Books consulted cover the years from 1565 to 1570, though there is a gap for Michaelmas 1565-Michaelmas 1566 when the account is missing.

<sup>56</sup> TNA, E190/46/25. The surviving report lists 17 ships, though one is listed twice. Ports of connection are given for them. Nine of them were Topsham vessels with two from Dartmouth and Exmouth and one from Beer, Milbrook and Dawlish. The types of wine are noted, being mainly Gascon and Rochell but also Nantes and French. The variance in tons is listed and although most are in single figures five instances are over 20 and the highest is 50. A summary note suggests that 198 tons of wine were not entered in the customs book. No Exeter connections are clear though Robert and Gilbert Cotton were merchants in the late 1560s. There are further entries of the commission for 1577 and 1579: Jones, *Inside the Illicit Economy*.

## *Town Customs*

Exeter possesses an excellent series of Town Customs, dating from the reign of Edward I up to 1610, and kept in the Devon Heritage Centre.<sup>57</sup> The survival of such accounts is rare. The city claimed the right to levy these from a grant of the fee farm made in 1259. The city had a bailiff at Topsham, Exeter's port at the head of the Exe estuary about four miles south east of the city, from the early fourteenth century who collected the town custom for goods being unloaded in the port or on the river. He was responsible to the city receiver and it is his name which appears at the top of the customs rolls. Hooker took over this role by 1556. He provided a list of the commodities on which town duties were paid in his 'Description'.<sup>58</sup> An edition of the Town Customs rolls covering the years from 1266 to 1321 has been published by Kowaleski.<sup>59</sup> An unpublished volume of transcripts of the accounts by Touchard covering the years from 1381 to 1433 was also used.<sup>60</sup> These works were of great value in providing an insight into the later accounts.

For the later fifteenth century 19 Town Customs accounts are extant: five providing information for trade in the 1470s, seven for the 1480s and seven for the 1490s. Material for the early sixteenth century is far less full. Four Town Customs accounts cover the first decade of the sixteenth century but there are none for the 1510s or 1530s and only a sole account for 1526/7 survives for that decade. There are three accounts extant for the 1540s, four for the 1550s and six for the 1560s. Down until at least 1545 the city receiver was responsible for making a return of the Town Custom for his year of office. In 1521 the city council passed an order farming the town customs to Henry Hamlyn for seven years but this was quickly rescinded. It was then stated that the Town customs was the joint responsibility of the receiver with the Town Clerk or his deputy.<sup>61</sup> Hooker took up the duty, probably when he became the city's Chamberlain in 1555. For three years, in 1561/2, 1563/4 and 1564/5, accounts are extant from both Hooker and the city receiver.

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<sup>57</sup> DHC, ECA, Exeter Town Customs (hereafter TC) 1470-1568.

<sup>58</sup><sup>58</sup> Harte et al., *Description*, pp.553-567.

<sup>59</sup> M. Kowaleski, ed., *Local Customs Accounts of the Port of Exeter 1266-1321*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 36, 1993.

<sup>60</sup> Touchard, 'Douanes Municipales'.

<sup>61</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I ff.85a, 89b.

A limitation of these accounts is that they can only be used to study imports as the custom was levied only on goods coming into the port. Secondly they do not state any port of embarkation and therefore we can only be approximate about the origin of cargoes. They do not distinguish between overseas and coastal trade and therefore are of more value when a Particular of Customs account and a Town Customs roll are extant for the same year, when an exact comparison can be made between them. Nevertheless, it is fairly easy to distinguish overseas trade from general coastal commodities, although the re-direction of imports from overseas to Exeter presents a problem. A major advantage of the Exeter Town Customs compared to those which survive for other English towns is that they do record traders who claimed exemptions, such as freemen, which is often not the case for town customs accounts.<sup>62</sup> These records consequently give us a very full picture. The Town Customs, especially those from the late fifteenth century, often record the towns of residence of the traders enabling the origins of non-Exeter traders to be identified. They record coastal trade in detail which often gives us an insight into the very local Devon coastwise traffic. However, there are instances in the Act Books of men evading Town Customs coming before the city council. These involved both Exeter men and traders from other towns and cities, though the number of cases is not large.<sup>63</sup> The cargoes brought in illegally noted here were usually landed at Topsham.<sup>64</sup> Overall, the Town Customs accounts help to provide a much more complete picture of the traders for Exeter than is possible for many port cities.

With regard to the coastal trade a detailed comparison was made of the Particulars of Customs and the Town Customs accounts which survive for the same year. Overseas trade can firstly be identified and compared in the two sets of accounts and then the remainder in the Town Custom can be identified as probably coastal trading, as was done by Kowaleski for five years between

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<sup>62</sup> H.S Cobb, 'Local Customs Accounts Prior to 1550,' *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 1,8, 1958, pp.213-224.

<sup>63</sup> DHC, ECA, ABII ff. 51b, 57b, 59b, 60a, 65a, 80a, 173b; AB III ff. 50-51, 57, 179, 184, 204, 220. Men were usually fined for evasion of Town Customs and goods were seized. There are cases of evasion by a trader from Fowey in 1542, by Exeter traders in 1543, 1546 and in 1559 at Topsham, by London men in 1560 and 1568, by men from Chard in 1566 and 1567, by Guernsey traders in 1561 and by traders where no home port is stated in 1544, 1545 and 1546.

<sup>64</sup> DHC, ECA, AB II f. 65a, 67a, 69a. By Peter Lake of Exeter in 1546, William Scorier from an unnamed town in 1547 and by Ivyn Eston, probably an alien trader, in 1546 at Topsham.

1384 and 1411.<sup>65</sup> For the present study 11 such parallel sets of accounts survive for the period under examination,<sup>66</sup> though in two cases the national customs accounts are in such poor condition that comparison with the local rolls is not possible. The survival of such directly comparable sets of customs accounts is rare. From the nine sets of accounts compared in detail an average of 65.5% of the ships entering the port of Exeter from overseas which appear in the national customs were also recorded by the local official. This gives us some idea of the extent of the overseas trade. Many of the ships entering the port which were recorded by the town customer, but not at all by the national sources, can be identified as coastal shipping. In every year except 1567/68 the number of vessels noted by the town customer exceeds those by his Crown equivalent, though only in the account for the early months of 1471 is this significantly so. This may reflect the political confusions of the early months of 1471.

### *Certificate Books*

Use has also been made of the far less well known Certificate Books kept in the National Archives within the E122 Particulars of Account series. In the national customs system from the early fourteenth century onwards traders were usually required to put themselves under bonds, the purpose being to ensure that they did not export English goods overseas under the guise of local trade. The merchant would be released from this bond by presenting a certificate showing that the goods had been legally landed at an English port. From 1549 details of these bonds were entered in 'certificate books' and become a valuable source of information on the coastal trade. For Exeter some 'certificate books' survive from 1549 to 1564.

Information in the Certificate Books about the direction of trade is limited to providing some destinations of ships leaving the port. The origin of ships entering the port is generally not stated. The books do, however, list the

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<sup>65</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.227.

<sup>66</sup> TNA, E12241/3,41/4,201/1,41/14,41/15,41/18,41/25,43/14,43/15,45/111; E190/926/1; DHC/ECA,TC 10/11, 20/21, Edward IV, 4/5,8/9,9/10, 18/19 Henry VII, 34/35 Henry VIII, 4/5-5/6 Philip and Mary,9/10 Elizabeth I. Use was made of the parallel accounts for January to April 1471, June to September 1471, October 1492 to September 1493, April to September 1494, September 1502 to September 1503, October 1543 to September 1544, October to November 1544, November 1557 to October 1558, October 1567 to September 1568. The Particulars of account for 1480-81 and 1488-89 are in poor condition.

cargoes, merchants, names of the ships and of their masters and the date of sailing. Most of them do not cover a complete customs year. Those for the years from 1552 to 1556 have been analysed. Two other certificate books, which survive for the latter part of the reign of Edward VI, do not provide any specific details on the destination of the vessels leaving Exeter. Three Certificate Books are extant for 1558/1559, 1561/2 and 1563/4 and these have also been studied but they only record parts of years.<sup>67</sup> Some coast bonds and landing certificates survive for 1549 to 1551 but they do not have much material from the port of Exeter itself, only the wider customs union.<sup>68</sup>

### *Enrolled Accounts*

In identifying the volume of overseas trade through Exeter reference was made to the totals provided by Carus Wilson and Coleman in their volume on *England's Export Trade 1275-1547*.<sup>69</sup> In particular, the tables and graphs on cloth exports from 1470 to 1547 were used.<sup>70</sup> Their figures were derived from the series of Exchequer Enrolled Customs Accounts (E356) in the National Archives. These give an overview of the fluctuations in the export of wool and cloth. Raw wool exports from Exeter were negligible. The cloth export figures are used contextually for this study. No Enrolled Accounts exist for the reigns of Edward VI and Mary and Carus Wilson and Coleman suggest that after 1558 the system had changed considerably.<sup>71</sup>

## **1.4 The City Act Books**

The city council or 'chamber' Act Books are used in this study. They mainly record the members present at the meetings of the council and brief details of the major decisions made at each one. Act Books I, II, III and IV have been used, which begin in 1508.<sup>72</sup> There may have been an earlier minute book

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<sup>67</sup> TNA, E122/44/8, 117/8, 45/1, 45/2, 45/3, 45/5, 45/6, 45/8, 45/9, 45/1046/146/9, 46/13 were consulted. There is also a series of Exeter certificate books for the latter part of Elizabeth's reign covering years from 1585 to 1590 but these have not formed part of this study.

<sup>68</sup> TNA, E122/44/3, 44/9.

<sup>69</sup> E.M. Carus Wilson and O. Coleman, *England's Export Trade 1275-1547*, Oxford, 1963.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.104-119, 145.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p1. n.2.

<sup>72</sup> Act Book I includes material dated from 1508 to 1538. Act Book II continues up to 1560 but also contains some matters from years as early as 1509. It has been suggested that Act Book I is partly a minute book and Act Book II an Act Book but the relationship between the two books does not seem at all that straightforward as both books contain much material not in the other. Act Book III is clearer and covers the years from 1560 to 1581, though only the first decade has

which is now lost. However, some of the miscellaneous material incorporated in the so-called 'Freemen's Book' (Book 55), which is more than a register of entries to the franchise, suggests that there was no earlier minute book. This 'Freemen's Book' contains a few ordinances which relate to the town council from as early as 1473 and notes of 'acta' from some mayoralties between 1483 and 1504. There is also a list of 17 members of the Twenty Four dated 7 December 1506 which follows the same format as the lists in the earliest minute book. The Act Books have been used to build up a picture of the membership, activities and role within the city of the Twenty Four (the city councillors). A detailed study of the composition of the council was made.<sup>73</sup>

### 1.5 Taxation Records

Taxation records are used to analyse the distribution of wealth within the city. The Tenth of 1489 and the Military Survey of 1522 are extant in the Devon Heritage Centre. The lay subsidies of 1524/25, 1544 and 1557 are in the National Archives. All of these have been transcribed and edited by Rowe in *Tudor Exeter: Tax Assessments 1489-1595*, published in 1977. In some cases the original documents have also been consulted in London and Exeter. The 'Anticipation' of 1523 for Exeter is not included in Rowe's collection and has been transcribed in Appendix 5.<sup>74</sup> To find details relating to the wider range of traders using the port of Exeter the Devon Subsidy rolls of 1524-27, 1543-45 and the Devon Muster Roll of 1569 have been used, either as a printed or CD copy.<sup>75</sup> A Tenth of 1488 for Tiverton was consulted in the Devon Heritage Centre's collection.<sup>76</sup> A list of fines imposed on the Taunton citizenry in the wake of the Warbeck rebellion in 1497 provides a valuable list of the leading

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been used for this study, and it was kept by John Hooker. Although Act Book IV covers the years from 1581 to 1588 it also contains another book of notes by Hooker and for the most part is a record of presentments of nuisances within the city between 1559 and 1576. This can be compared directly with Book 100 in the city archives. *HMC Report* pp. 302-339 outlines the Act Books.

<sup>73</sup> Their orders provide information on a very wide range of topics including trade, freemen, guilds, aliens, fairs and markets, leases of property, city improvement measures and reactions to crisis such as plague. They are, however, only summaries of the major decisions made and they only reflect the perspective of the council itself.

<sup>74</sup> TNA, E179/97/186.

<sup>75</sup> T.L. Stoate ed., *Devon Subsidy Rolls 1524-7*, Almondsbury, 1979; T.L. Stoate ed. *Devon Subsidy Rolls 1543-1545*, Almondsbury 1986, CD 2004; T.L. Stoate and A.J. Howard ed. *The Devon Muster Roll for 1569*, Almondsbury 1977, CD 2004.

<sup>76</sup> DHC, CR557.

inhabitants.<sup>77</sup> There is currently no published edition of the Somerset lay subsidies for the early sixteenth century apart from Webb's edition of the 1558 returns.<sup>78</sup> As a result, the Somerset lay subsidies for the 1520s and 40s were examined, especially for Taunton, at the National Archives.<sup>79</sup>

The Tenth of 1489 for Exeter provides detailed insight into Exeter's elite in the late fifteenth century. From the Exeter Tenth the inhabitants who paid on property in their own right and also those who paid as tenants were identified. The assessment was on one tenth of the income from lands and 8d for every 10 marks of movable goods. The taxation payments made by individual citizens were ranked relatively against each other in terms of their identified wealth in 1489 (Appendix 4).<sup>80</sup> Forrest's study of the reductions made by the government in the tenths and fifteenths in the South West identifies that Exeter received the second highest reduction in the county in 1489, after Plymouth.<sup>81</sup> Kowaleski noted the potential importance of the study of the Tenth in that it included 450 taxpayers, more than the 420 in the 1377 murage roll. She suggested that this is an indication of the city's growing population in the late fifteenth century as the Tenth included a smaller range of payers than the murage rolls.<sup>82</sup>

Exeter's Military Survey of 1522 is a rare documentary survival. The only really comparable urban survey extant is for Coventry.<sup>83</sup> Although the Exeter document has been published in Rowe's *Tudor Exeter* the original was also consulted in the Exeter City Archives.<sup>84</sup> It is a key document due to its comprehensive nature but it has not been extensively analysed by previous historians. The 1522 return was far more than just a military muster. This survey

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<sup>77</sup> A.J. Howard ed., *Fines Imposed on Persons who assisted the Rebels during the Cornish Rebellion and the Insurrection of Perkin Warbeck in 1497*, Pinner, 1986.

<sup>78</sup> A.J. Webb, ed., *Two Tudor Subsidies for the County of Somerset: 1558 and 1581-82*, Somerset Record Society, 88, 2002.

<sup>79</sup> TNA, E179/169/154; E179/170/193.

<sup>80</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.viii.

<sup>81</sup> M. Forrest, 'Patterns of Economic Change in the South-West during the Fifteenth Century: evidence from the reductions to fifteenths and tenths', *Economic History Review*, 70: 2, 2017, pp.423-451. This was probably part of the pattern in the area where larger towns received higher rebates, especially in Devon where the reductions for boroughs were considerably more than rural areas. The reduction given to Exeter, at a time when its overseas trade was entering a boom period, was probably not an indication of any economic difficulties but just part of a government policy of local co-operation and flexibility in the use of the tax.

<sup>82</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p88 n.42.

<sup>83</sup> This has been especially analysed by Pythian-Adams, *Desolation*.

<sup>84</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 156A.



enquired not only into military competency and the possession of equipment but also into individual wealth and provides the fullest list of Exeter's citizens in the Tudor period. From it the relative wealth and standing of individuals, parishes and, to an extent, occupations have been examined.

The Exeter Military Survey of 1522 contains assessments for 13 intramural parishes plus the partly extramural Holy Trinity, St David and the Cathedral Close. It lists 956 resident taxpayers, the highest density being in St Mary Major, the Cathedral Close, and Holy Trinity.<sup>85</sup> It gives our only glimpse of both lay and ecclesiastical populations at this time, though no study has been made of the latter here.

The survey records people's wealth even when assessed as 'nil' and so provides a more comprehensive view of the social structure than most contemporary surveys. For instance, it provides insight into the standing and role of aliens in Exeter at the time. It includes 'servants' in households, who in this case were probably mostly skilled workers and some apprentices. The occupational information given in the survey is limited but was used to fill out the incomplete picture of the city trades. It also gives us some information on craft guilds as it lists institutions which held land within the Exeter parishes such as the cordwainers in St Paul. It does not record individuals within households and so can only be used to estimate population size. In this study a more complete picture has emerged by closely comparing the information in the Military Survey with the subsidy returns from a few years later as shown in Appendix 3.

The first instalment of the lay subsidy in the 1520s was paid 'in anticipation' by November 1523 by all persons owning land or goods over £40. The assessment of this 'Anticipation' for Devon survives in excellent condition in the National Archives. Its importance lies in the fact that it records the top stratum of the community in detail. There are 61 recorded payments for Exeter, far more than for any other Devon town (see Appendix 5).

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<sup>85</sup> The 1522 Military Survey covered 14 city parishes and The Close. There are no entries for the intramural St Lawrence, St Mary Steps, All Hallows on The Walls or for the extramural St Edmund and St Sidwell.

The 1524 and 1525 lay subsidies have often been the major source for examining the social structure of towns, as in the case of Totnes, Dartmouth and Shrewsbury, and for major cities comparable with Exeter such as Norwich and York.<sup>86</sup> The lay subsidies in Exeter were collected by parish, as they were in most towns, and so are not as revealing as the ones surviving for Shrewsbury, which were collected by the 15 craft fellowships and thus are closely linked to occupations.<sup>87</sup>

Detailed comparisons have been made between the Military Survey of 1522 and the lay subsidies of 1524 and 1525. An analysis of the distribution of wealth in 1524/25 has been based on the extant returns for 13 Exeter parishes for 1524 plus 4 returns for 1525 and also lists for the 3 extramural parishes of St Edmund, St Thomas and St Sidwell. For 14 parishes we can see the changing pattern of wealth in the years from 1522 to 1525. Only for St Edmund and nearby St Thomas is it possible to make a direct comparison of the 1524 and 1525 lay subsidy lists. The lay subsidies provide some information on aliens, occupations and women in the community which was compared with the 1522 data.

Hoyle has contended that the lay subsidies of the 1540s are of more use than many historians have acknowledged, though those levied from 1557/8 and for the latter part of the sixteenth century 'cease to serve as a mirror of population size or wealth'.<sup>88</sup> Osborne was able to test the validity of the later subsidy assessments by comparing them with inventorial values.<sup>89</sup>

The Lay Subsidy of 1544 for Exeter has been studied using Rowe's edition and also that published by Stoate for Devon, which includes some of the extramural parishes in Wonford Hundred.<sup>90</sup> Comparisons were made with the lists for the 1520s. The 1543 Subsidy Act set out the proportional payments to be made by all persons assessed on £1 or more worth of goods or lands. Unlike the earlier

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<sup>86</sup> L.Nicholls, 'The Lay Subsidy of 1523: The Reliability of the Subsidy Rolls as illustrated by Totnes and Dartmouth.', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* 9, 1964, pp. 113-129; W.A. Champion, 'The Shrewsbury Lay Subsidy of 1525', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society*, 64, 1985, pp.35-46; Pound, *Tudor and Stuart Norwich*, Palliser, *Tudor York*.

<sup>87</sup> Champion, 'Shrewsbury Lay Subsidy'.

<sup>88</sup> R. Hoyle, *Tudor Taxation Records*, London, 1994, pp.26-31 at p.29.

<sup>89</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp.49, 76-78, 81-85.

<sup>90</sup> Stoate, *Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls*.

subsidies no wage earners were called upon to pay. This limits its use for comparison with the earlier subsidies.<sup>91</sup>

In the 1544 Exeter lay subsidy for the intramural parishes 743 persons paid on goods and only 33 persons on lands. The 1544 subsidy serves as a more complete picture of Exeter's social structure than the taxation listing of the following year. It gives a little occupational information and lists some 'aliens' and 'inhabitants'. The 1545 'benevolence' provides a less complete picture but it contains some endorsements of Exeter persons claiming that they were 'so pore that arr not able to paie'.<sup>92</sup> The 1544 return was used to reach conclusions about relative wealth at that time and provides valuable comparisons with the 1520s.

The 1557 Exeter lay subsidy gives parishes of residence for those assessed and includes 276 taxpayers. It has been used mainly to check the relative wealth of the leading citizens or to trace individual merchants or artisans. Most assessments were on goods with only 24 on lands, though the latter valuations ranged from £100 to £1. Ten persons were assessed on over £40 of goods or land.

It has been generally accepted that the assessments of this date were less accurate and so are not useful in giving a picture of the true wealth of the people at the time. Hoyle has noted that with a fall in the numbers of people assessed the returns cease to be of much value in calculating population size or wealth. Certainly changes in the tax threshold, underassessment, the lack of sworn presentments, seemingly more evasion, and an increased willingness to avoid more burdensome taxation, all need to be taken into account when using the later Tudor lay subsidies, especially from 1557 onwards.<sup>93</sup> However, a more optimistic view of the use of later Tudor subsidies is emerging. The 1557 lay subsidy for Exeter gives some useful information on the alien citizens. Osborne has completed work on Exeter's social structure using the 1586 lay

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<sup>91</sup> TNA E179/98/246, 98/262, 97/240, 99/281. For 1544 the edition published in *Tudor Exeter* pp.45-54 has been consulted. The 1543 return is in poor condition but the 1545 list in the National Archives is directly comparable with that for 1544 and more analysis could be made of this. The Wonford returns give only the amount paid and not the assessment made. It is possible to calculate what this would have been fairly easily but the assessments are not all clearly designated as being for lands or goods, though most of them would have been for goods.

<sup>92</sup> TNA E179/99/285.

<sup>93</sup> Hoyle, *Tudor Taxation Records* pp29-30.

subsidy in particular. Importantly she has been able to relate the lay subsidy returns to inventory valuations and concluded that there is a good correlation between relative taxable wealth in the lay subsidies and relative wealth at death using the inventory valuations.<sup>94</sup> All of the Tudor taxation records are valuable in enabling us to ascertain the relative position of members of the community in relation to one another.

The 1557 subsidy provides data for the last period covered in this study. Overall the subsidy and survey returns are open to a variety of interpretations and too much reliance cannot be placed on them. The validity of the lists must be checked. Only when linking them fully with other records can a fuller picture be built up.

## 1.6 Guild Records

Evidence concerning Exeter's craft guilds is more substantial for the fifteenth century than for previous centuries. This is particularly true for the Tailors' guild and for the guild of Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen. MacCaffrey thought that the latter was 'the only one whose records remain' but this is not the case.<sup>95</sup> That guild has provided the subject for the only substantial study of an individual Exeter guild, undertaken by Youings.<sup>96</sup> The present study has drawn substantially on the surviving records of the Tailors' guild. Two Act Books survive for it. One covers from 1533 to 1599 but inside it there is an earlier book for 1478 to 1533.<sup>97</sup> The present study has primarily made use of the material covering 1478 to 1570. Two subsequent Act Books are also extant for 1600 to 1715 and 1715 to 1846.<sup>98</sup> The collection of Tailors' documents held in Exeter also contains charters and their subsequent confirmations, the letters patent from 1466, the grant of arms in 1564 and some copies of eighteenth century acts and ordinances. Lucy Toulmin Smith published a number of, mainly late-fifteenth century, extracts in 1870.<sup>99</sup> The use of the Tailors' records is an important element of this study.

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<sup>94</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus' pp. 783-4, 787-8, 1073-1074.

<sup>95</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p88.

<sup>96</sup> Youings, *Tuckers Hall*.

<sup>97</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I and IA.

<sup>98</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB II and TAB III.

<sup>99</sup> L.Toulmin Smith, ed. *English Guilds*, Early English Text Society, 1870, pp.299-337.

The Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen are by far the best known of the Exeter guilds. This is due to the survival of their hall, Tuckers' Hall, in Fore Street and to the continuation of their society to the present day. Reference has been made to the most recent and substantial history of the guild written by Youings. More recently the guild minute books have been made available on- line. Their first Minute Book dates from 1565 and this has been studied for the few years relevant here.<sup>100</sup>

No Merchants' guild existed in Exeter before the start of the reign of Elizabeth. Its foundation is of key importance in this research. Much of our knowledge of the Merchants' Company derives from the survival of their 'court book' which covers the years from its inception in 1560 up to 1601.<sup>101</sup> Substantial extracts covering the whole period were published by William Cotton in 1873.<sup>102</sup> Records of the Exeter Company only survive for the period up to 1601.<sup>103</sup> The Merchants' Court Book was studied in depth for the years from 1560 to 1570. The other major records surviving for the Company are papers concerning the dispute surrounding its foundation which contain copies of interrogations, examinations, narratives, assertions, answers and supplications from the time as well as a number of copies of the charter.<sup>104</sup> These were the main source used by MacCaffrey in his discussion of the founding of the Company.<sup>105</sup> They have been studied here to illuminate the dispute and also for the information which they provide on both the merchant and artisan elements of Exeter's trading community at the end of the period.

There are no other collections of records for the Exeter guilds and so small amounts of material on them have been accumulated from a variety of sources. This has been most successful for the cordwainers' guild. Some civic records also enable us to make comparisons of the standing of the guilds at a given

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<sup>100</sup> [www.tuckershall.org.uk/hall/history/clothtrade](http://www.tuckershall.org.uk/hall/history/clothtrade)

<sup>101</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11.

<sup>102</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild* p.vi. Cotton notes that they were discovered within the collection of the Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen.

<sup>103</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.152 n.52.

<sup>104</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185.

<sup>105</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.136-159.

point, such as the relative contributions which they made to the purchase of grain supplies for the city in 1562.<sup>106</sup>

## 1.7 Central Court Records

Records of some of the London central equity courts add important information. Chancery (C1 and C3), Star Chamber (STAC) and Requests (REQ) were consulted at the National Archives using the original manuscript sources. Index searches were carried out using 'Exeter' and 'Topsham' as place name searches. Those for Common Pleas were made via the AALT website using the same searches.

Chancery court cases were studied from 1467. A strength of this source is the wide range of types of cases included within them. Many Exeter inhabitants representing a large number of occupations were involved in Chancery cases. Some of the early cases concerning trade and shipping were included in a volume by Gardiner.<sup>107</sup> Cases have been used here to indicate the network connections of traders, especially merchants and tailors. The Chancery cases provided information on occupational disputes, on businesses, apprenticeship disputes, the price of goods, market offences, freedom disputes and local guilds. Cases involved debts, loans, bonds, assault and imprisonment. Others concerned property, landholding and trespass and the loss of goods. Some have provided evidence of the marriage of traders, and of re-marriages, which can help to explain the development of businesses. Disputes about bequests in wills offered further evidence of how the Exeter families were connected with each other. They also provided evidence of the death of a trader before the advent or survival of parish registers. Chancery was a court to which the alleged offences of the mayor and his officials could be brought so they sometimes gave insights into the operation of urban government. A number of the cases were brought concerning the Staple Court in Exeter so this gave further insights into an institution for which few records survive. There are some problems as the surviving documentation is sometimes in poor condition. Occupational information was not recorded systematically in the court but is often included.

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<sup>106</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 229.

<sup>107</sup> D.A. Gardiner, *A Calendar of Early Chancery Proceedings Relating to West Country Shipping 1388-1493*, DCRS, 21, 1976.

Documentation cannot always be precisely dated as it is listed by Chancellor and not always dated specifically.

Star Chamber records contain more depositions and interrogations. Star Chamber cases from the reigns of Henry VII up to Mary were searched (STAC1, 2, 3 and 4.) More recent indexes for Devon have now been compiled for the more inaccessible Elizabethan material (STAC5) but only two useful cases were discovered.<sup>108</sup> Four of the most relevant cases from the late fifteenth century were transcribed by Leadam and published in 1903.<sup>109</sup> The nature of the Star Chamber cases, involving the allegation of more serious misdemeanours, makes the reader more suspicious of their veracity. Many of the Exeter cases concern property disputes and only the wealthier would probably have brought cases to the court.

The Court of Requests contains a small range of cases concerning Exeter from the reigns of Henry VII to Elizabeth I. They are largely concerning property, debt, imprisonment and office holding. Depositions, answers and bills of complaint survive in them. Some of the depositions and interrogations are useful in adding human detail, including approximate ages. One major Requests case, involving the mayoralty of the Exeter Staple in 1498, was transcribed and published by Leadam.<sup>110</sup>

The Court of Common Pleas records indexed as part of the AALT project, is a valuable online source.<sup>111</sup> Work by Ashford on the Somerset cases in Common Pleas was especially helpful as a guide.<sup>112</sup> No previous work has been conducted before on Common Pleas cases concerning Exeter for this period and they have therefore provided another original approach to the study of the

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<sup>108</sup> [www.uhu.edu/waalt/index.php/STAC-co-Devon](http://www.uhu.edu/waalt/index.php/STAC-co-Devon); J. Guy, *The Court of Star Chamber and its Records to the Reign of Elizabeth*, London, 1985.

<sup>109</sup> I.S. Leadam, ed., *Select Cases before the King's Council in the Star Chamber commonly called the Court of Star Chamber 1477-1509*, Selden Society, 17, 1903. Two of these concerned the tailors' guild and the dispute about the payment of scavage by Exeter merchants in London, which gave some useful information on the activities of the Exeter merchants.

<sup>110</sup> I.S. Leadam, ed., *Select Cases in the Court of Requests 1497-1569*, Selden Society, 12, 1898.

<sup>111</sup> <http://aalt.uh.edu/Indices/CPIndices/CP40Indices.html>

<sup>112</sup> P. Ashford, 'Mercantile Debt in Somerset 1500-1550: evidence from the Court of Common Pleas', *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History*, 157, 2014 pp.58-71. The author also provided me with a copy of his then unpublished paper 'Mercantile Debt Patterns during the Fifteenth Century: further revelations provided by the Common Pleas', *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History* 159, 2016, pp.140-157. The advice of both Philip Ashford and Nicholas Amor has been valuable in approaching this material.

trading community. Those for the years which have been indexed by place have been used, which includes material from the 1470s up to 1554.<sup>113</sup> Importantly all cases include the occupation of the defendant. However, the types of cases are far less wide than for Chancery. They are largely debt cases or allege trespass and/or assault. They have been used to compile an occupational index which is included as Appendix 13. This serves as a useful supplement of occupational information from some of the better-known historical sources used for this purpose. It is, however, slanted towards the better-off, though not as much as was anticipated. It is exceptional in that it contains some occupations not known from any other records such as shepsters and luters. Often it also provides the parish of the defendant, especially for the extramural ones. The Common Pleas records have been especially helpful in studying the trading networks of tailors and merchants.

## 1.8 Shop Fines

From the early sixteenth century lists of people paying shop fines exist for Exeter, a rare survival. Some lists of similar levies also survive for the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>114</sup> Shop fines were paid by non-freemen for permission to retail goods and conduct businesses in Exeter on payment of an annual fine, or performance of a service. Shop fine payments are recorded in the first city Act Book with notes of payers commencing in 1512 and continuing until 1528. For the first years they were placed under a note of the serving mayor, and there are no missing years. From 1519 they appear in date order within the Act Book up until 1528. There is also one part of a contemporary list which is undated.<sup>115</sup> After 1528 a separate book was kept containing the shop fine payments. This begins with an undated list, which may be from 1529. The new book then

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<sup>113</sup> The years currently indexed are:

1470,1472,1475,1477,1480,1483,1484,1486,1489,1490,1492,1495,1498,1500,1502,1505,1508,1510,1512,1514,1516,1519,1521,1523,1524,1525,1526,1527,1528,1529,1530,1531,1533,1535,1536,1537,1538,1543,1544,1545,1546,1547,1548,1549,1554. The project is an on-going one and more years will be indexed.

<sup>114</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp. 186-187. The issuing of special licences allowing non-freemen to engage in retail trade did occur at the end of the thirteenth and in the fourteenth century but a more identifiable system for levying annual fines on persons engaged in retail, who were not freemen, seems to have been more obviously in force by the mid fifteenth century. Compilations of lists of 'Open Shopholders' who were non-freemen retailers were made between 1454 and 1460. These were similar in nature to the Early Tudor shop fines. No record survives of the levying of these payments between 1460 and 1512.

<sup>115</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I ff.159a-194b.



contains dated returns of shop fine payers from 1530 to 1542. The records of payments cease at this point and the rest of the folios in the book were left blank.<sup>116</sup> A further eight lists of shop fines, covering the years from 1560 to 1572, were discovered within Book 100 in the Exeter City Archives.<sup>117</sup> There are no further lists of shop fine payers contained within it. . All these records, with the exception of the first, are dated and headed 'Fin Shoparum,' or 'Shophe Fynes. 'There is also a reference to shop fines being imposed on 'sundry Foreigners inhabiting within the City' in 1545.<sup>118</sup> Individual cases recorded in the Act Books refer to the system in 1562 and the last evidence of it operating has been found a decade later.<sup>119</sup> It may be that lists of shop fine payers were compiled between 1460 and 1512 and between the mid 1540s and 1561 which have not survived.

The lists of shop fines give the names of payers, organised by city Quarter. There is sometimes a note of the occupation. More frequently the amount paid is recorded. These designated entries are very useful as in some cases they are the only reference we have to the occupation of a tradesman at the time. Equally they help to establish the existence of minor occupations such as arrasmakers, cardmakers and clockmakers, or the multiple occupations of one man such as Michael Pepyn an armourer, smith and glazier in the 1520s. They are a very valuable addition to the evidence of the freemen's records which, in the earlier part of the period studied in particular, are variable in their survival for Exeter and often do not record an occupation. However, the number of entries with designated occupations varies, being fuller for the earlier years. This reflects the manner in which the records were kept and perhaps also the importance of the collection of the shop fines to the city council. The total sums received by the city from shop fines are provided for ten of the earlier years between 1513 and 1526 but were not recorded in the city receivers' accounts.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 156B ff.1-42.

<sup>117</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 100 ff. 57-58, 79-80,109-110,119-120,135-136,163-164,177, 211. There is a note in the cover of the book dating from November 1930 acknowledging that the book was re-sewn, re-bound and repaired 'in a reconstruction of the original style'.

<sup>118</sup> R. Izacke, *Remarkable Antiquities of the City of Exeter*, 2<sup>nd</sup>.edition, Exeter, 1723, p.122.

<sup>119</sup> See n.117.

<sup>120</sup> DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff. 177a, 160a, 170b, 165b, 179a, 182a, 183b, 185a, 189b, 192b; *Exeter Freemen*, pp.xx-xxi.

Some payments were made in kind and the commodity to be provided is stated. These can sometimes give us an insight into the operation of the crafts themselves. Occasionally, this entails the performance of a service for the city. They were working documents as they often contain an acknowledgement that payment has been made and deletions of entries are frequent. Sometimes the reasons for these are given. The major reason appears to be that the man has been made free of the city and the term 'lib' was added to acknowledge this. Also there are some additional notes which indicate that the payer had left the city 'exunt', or that he had died, 'mortus est'. The lists do not make reference to the parish of residence of the shop fine payer, though there are a few references to men who are resident in the Bishop's Fee and therefore did not pay.

Very few English cities have similar documentation for this period. The best surviving records exist for Canterbury for the years from 1392 to 1592 but no other documents of this magnitude have been traced for any other English town.<sup>121</sup> The rare survival of such lists means that little has been written about them. Cowper raised some issues in his brief foreword to his edition of the Canterbury *Intrantes* Importantly the shop fine records give us an insight into the economic stratum within the city below the freeman ranks.

### **1.9 Freeman's Records**

Rowe and Jackson's '*Exeter Freeman 1266-1967*', published in 1973, provides historians of Exeter with an immensely valuable resource.<sup>122</sup> For the sixteenth century no freemen's rolls are known for Exeter as they are for some other major provincial cities such as Bristol, Norwich or York. There are also no apprenticeship rolls either. To compile a list of freemen Rowe and Jackson drew upon the Mayor's Court rolls and Mayor's Court books, Book 55, notes by John Hooker, the receiver's account rolls and the Chamber Act Books for the entries from between 1470 and 1570.<sup>123</sup> The editors carefully acknowledge defects with the records; most notable for this study is the fact that for the years between 1506 and 1510 the receiver's account rolls are the only source and so only

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<sup>121</sup> J.M. Cowper, ed., *Intrantes: Persons Admitted To Live and Trade Within the City of Canterbury, On Payment Of An Annual Fine: From 1392 to 1592*, Canterbury, 1904.

<sup>122</sup> *Exeter Freeman*.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.xxx-xxxiv.

entries by fine are known, but not entries by apprenticeship or succession.<sup>124</sup> A further problem is that *Exeter Freeman* entries for 16 years in the late fifteenth century and between 1540 and 1545 do not contain any occupational designations.<sup>125</sup> However, this publication provides more information about the urban crafts than any other single source. Nevertheless, the freemen's admissions can be supplemented by using a number of other sources, though even then the picture is not complete.

The freemen's admissions in many cases record the craft of the apprentice admitted and often that of the master. For Exeter we only know about apprenticeships which led to men being made free so any figures for apprenticeships are likely to be considerable underestimates, as in other cities many apprentices never became free. For Exeter the freemen's admissions indicate only the trade pursued by the craftsman at the time he entered the freedom and can prove to be unreliable as evidence of later occupations in an age when changes of occupation and by-employment or multiple-employment were common. In the years from 1450 to 1525, 850 admissions are recorded and of these 63% give no information about the trade of the freeman elected or that of the master. The period from 1526 to 1600 is more fully recorded and the lists are therefore more useful. Then 1,683 new freemen are noted and of these 40% yield no direct occupational information. Of the total entries for the latter period 51.5% record the trade of the new freeman, 5% that of his master and 3.5% give the trade of both men. From 1470 to 1570 of 290 men who held the civic offices of mayor, receiver and bailiff only 13 cannot be traced as freemen. For the Tudor period we do therefore have a fairly accurate picture of the city elite.

In Exeter the freedom conferred the privilege of retail selling, except on market days, in perpetuity whereas shop fines granted this right for one year. The freedom was therefore far more important for a man engaged in the distributive trades than it was for a manufacturer without a retail outlet. The sources record the method of admission to the freedom. This could be by payment of a fine (often indicating that the person was a migrant to the city), by the completion of

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p.xxxiii.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-76. The years where there is no occupational information are 1473-4, 1475-6, 1477-82, 1483-4, 1486-7, 1488-91, 1492-94, 1496-97, 1497-98.

an apprenticeship, or by succession (usually of an eldest son to a father). Between 1450 and 1600 admissions to the freedom by all these three methods followed a broadly similar pattern of more substantial increase from the mid sixteenth century onwards. Admissions by the payment of a fine offer the most reliable set of figures as the annual revenues received from these payments can be checked in the city receivers' accounts.

The freemen's records are of such importance in the study of the trading community for this period that it is necessary to consider their completeness as a record overall. This has been done in Appendix 8 by examining them alongside the shop fines, as well as by comparing them with evidence of the lesser civic officials and with the guild records. A record survives of a group of men who were presented at the Mayor's Court in June 1560 for being freemen within their guilds but not having taken up the freedom of the city.<sup>126</sup> This indicates that there were some evasions of the city freedom at this time and must make us more careful in our use of the records. Appendix 8 shows that the more minor city officials such as the bailiffs and wardens of Exe Bridge are well represented in the freedom records. Men who ceased to pay shop fines because they entered the freedom can also be traced successfully. It further shows, from their extant guild records, that tailors and merchants became freemen but weavers did so far less. The freedom records are most reliable when looking at the city elite but less so when looking at the middling master craftsmen.

### **1.10 Probate Records**

Wills surviving in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in the National Archives were consulted and supplemented by wills found in various sources within the city archives such as the Mayor's Court Rolls, Exeter Deeds, Devon Deeds, the parish collections of Holy Trinity and St Mary Arches, guild records and the Exeter Orphans Court records. Exeter's wills were significantly depleted in the bombing of the city in 1942 and destruction of the Exeter Cathedral probate registry. The Oswyn Murray and Olive Moger abstract wills collections have also

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<sup>126</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 100, f.40.

been consulted as was the Devon Wills Project.<sup>127</sup> In total 147 Exeter wills have been identified with 106 of them made during the years from 1472 to 1570. Where occupations are given, by far the largest group designated themselves as merchants. There were also a number of widows and the remainder represent a range of occupations and social backgrounds. The will of Thomas Bond forms Appendix 12. It is a rare survival of a will made by an Exeter merchant residing abroad. Bond was resident in Spain later in his trading career. Wills from other towns which were an integral part of the Exeter trading community, notably Topsham, Tiverton, Cullompton and Taunton have been consulted. These are largely from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. The Taunton wills have been calendared.<sup>128</sup>

Wills have primarily been used to provide information about trade and business rather than households and families. The emphasis was therefore rather more economic than social or religious, though not exclusively so. Information was gleaned on legacies to guilds and for the improvement of roads and bridges, which was a concern of the trading community. From the Exeter wills cash bequests have been totalled and compared across the period. (Appendix 15) Debts are occasionally recorded though these are much more apparent in inventories. Trade networks and migration were considered through references to probable places of origin and places outside Exeter. Servants who received legacies were sometimes apprentices or journeyman.

Only the elite and the more substantial craftsmen have surviving wills. Few wills survive from lesser citizens.<sup>129</sup> Wills contain bequests of movable property but are far less helpful as records of immovable property and often give only a partial view of estates. Few wills survive from lesser citizens. Wills often omit family members. Property or businesses may have been transferred before the will was made or monies given to a son or daughter at marriage. Some Exeter wills do not give occupations. Those given were those engaged in near the end

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<sup>127</sup> Oswyn Murray Abstracts of Devon Wills and Olive Moger, Abstracts of Devon Wills, both in DHC, West Country Studies Library Collection. These are abstracts made before the bombing of the Exeter Probate Registry in 1942. The original copies of both collections were consulted. The Devon Wills Project on-line contained no extra wills for the years before 1570.

<sup>128</sup> F.W. Weaver ed. *Somerset Medieval Wills, 1383-1500, 1501-1530, 1531-1558*, Somerset Record Society, Volumes 16, 19 and 21, 1901, 1903 and 1905.

<sup>129</sup> The Exeter wills made before 1570 did include three men who designated themselves as bakers and a smith, a saddler, a brewer and a weaver though in the case of those engaged in the food and drink trades especially they may have been fairly prosperous.

of life and income was often derived from a range of activities. It may be that testators had another occupation or derived more wealth from property in their later years. Zell has warned in particular about the problems with systematic use of large numbers of wills as evidence contained in some wills is not contained in others.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless wills have provided some valuable material for this study.

The only substantial collection of Exeter inventories that falls within the period are those of the city's Orphans' Court, which received its charter in 1561.<sup>131</sup> The inventories were compiled, after a freeman had died without heirs who had reached a majority, by four or more appraisers of the estate. Fifteen inventories survive from between 1560 and 1570 and they cover men from a range of occupations. A few later inventories were used from the 1570s and 80s mainly if they were from men following an occupation for which there were no earlier inventories extant.<sup>132</sup> For the Exeter traders this information was linked with that in the surviving customs accounts.

The Exeter Orphans' Court as an institution has been the subject of detailed study by Carlton.<sup>133</sup> Hoskins in his article on the merchant class of Elizabethan Exeter, made much use of the Orphans' Court records as did MacCaffrey, when looking at the fiscal fortunes of the city.<sup>134</sup> MacCaffrey also used them to examine the relative wealth and annual incomes of Exeter's wealthier citizens in relation to those of London and some other provincial towns at the time.<sup>135</sup> The Elizabethan inventories have recently been edited and published by Crocker.<sup>136</sup>

The probate inventory for the merchant Henry Maunder made in 1564 includes extensive copies of entries made at the time from 'hys shoppe booke' (see Appendix 23) .This is the nearest that we can get to the workings of the

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<sup>130</sup> M.Zell, 'Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Wills as Historical Sources', *Archives*, 14, 1979, pp.67-74.

<sup>131</sup> DHC, ECA, Orphans' Court Inventories.

<sup>132</sup> DHC, ECA, Orphans' Court Inventories nos. 21 (Allen Marks, cook), 26 (Richard Mogridge, cutler), 28 (Thomas Byrd, tailor), 29 (Henry James, notary public), 31 (John Dynham, weaver), 35 (William Doddridge, weaver), 36 (Gilbert Lymbere, haberdasher and hatter), 38 (John Downe, innholder),

<sup>133</sup> Carlton, 'John Hooker', pp. 307-316; id., *Court of Orphans*.

<sup>134</sup> Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants'.

<sup>135</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.62, 263-265.

<sup>136</sup> J.Crocker, ed., *Elizabethan Wills and Inventories of the Exeter Orphans' Court*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 56, Exeter, 2016.

business of an Exeter merchant at the time as there are no personal or business papers known to be extant. The inventory provides details of his possessions 'In the Ware Howse', 'In the Shoppe' and 'In the sealer'. From the information on debts owing to him and owed by him, we can begin to reconstruct his trading network. There is a surviving Orphans' Court inventory for one tailor who died before 1570: the inventory of William Lant was appraised in May 1569.<sup>137</sup> In addition amongst the Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills an inventory was appended for the Exeter tailor and draper Thomas Hunt for 1548.<sup>138</sup>

### 1.11 A Wider Context: Additional Sources

A large number of other sources have also shaped the research. The city receiver's accounts provided information on payments and receipts concerning especially civic projects but also about some individual craftsmen, merchants and guilds.<sup>139</sup> The accounts of the wardens of Exe Bridge have been used to provide the names of the officials for the whole of the period.<sup>140</sup> A sample of the Exe Bridge accounts, at ten-year intervals from 1470, provided more detailed information.<sup>141</sup> The account rolls of some manors held by the city, notably Exe Island and Duryard were analysed. The Exe Bridge accounts provided material on the mills and some occupational data. Details of the holdings of the city butchers and graziers were taken from the Duryard accounts. The surviving Exe Island court rolls were also studied. Ten-year samples from all of these sources

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<sup>137</sup> DHC, ECA, Exeter Orphans' Court Inventory no.13; Crocker, *Elizabethan Wills and Inventories*, pp.57-66; Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus,' pp.513-527.

<sup>138</sup> TNA, Prob 11/32/11. In his will he did not give himself a specific occupation at all. The inventory is of all the household goods which were granted to his wife Elizabeth though there is some limited mention of the contents of his shop.

<sup>139</sup> DHC, ECA, Receiver's Accounts 10/11 Edward IV – 11/12 Eliz..I. The accounts for 13/14 Edward IV 15/16 Edward IV, 19/20 Edward IV, 1/2 Henry VII, 18/19 Henry VII, 9/10 Henry VIII, 14/15 Henry VIII, 23/24 Henry VIII, 32/33 Henry VIII, 6 Edward IV/I Mary, 4/5-5/6 Philip and Mary are missing. The account for 13/14 Henry VII is incomplete. Receiver's Account Books I and II and Receiver's Vouchers Box 1 were also studied.

<sup>140</sup> DHC, ECA, Accounts of the Wardens of Exe Bridge 10 Edward IV-12/13 Eliz I.

<sup>141</sup> DHC, ECA, Accounts of the Wardens of Exe Bridge 10/11 Edward IV, 21/22 Edward IV, 6/7 Henry VII, 16/17 Henry VII, 2/3 Henry VIII, 12/13 Henry VIII, 22/23 Henry VIII, 32/33 Henry VIII, 4/5 Edward VI, 2/3 Eliz. I. Details included those paying rents for property held by the wardens across the city. There are details of the necessary expenses of the wardens but these are fuller for some accounts than others. They give some occupational information and details of different types of mills and cloth racks. There is some material on the shops on Exe Bridge but some just list them without tenants and some later ones give tenants but not their occupations.

were taken where possible as many of these records comprise fairly full series.<sup>142</sup>

Some local court records were consulted. The earliest records of the Exeter Quarter-Sessions provided occupational data for the years from 1557 to 1570. The Book of Presentments of Nuisances at the Sessions of the Peace was examined from its inception in 1550 up to 1570 (the Book has entries within it which date up to 1588).<sup>143</sup> These cases also survive as a copy in one of the council Act Books.<sup>144</sup> They were 'presentments of nuisances' or bills of complaint drawn up by an infrequently appointed grand jury.<sup>145</sup> They provide a great deal of human detail on the individuals presented for offences, some of whom were merchants and artisans. They also provide material on a range of economic offences such as evasions of the freedom by city guild members. The other notable court studied was the Staple Court of Exeter for which some recognisance rolls survive for the 1520s and the late 1560s.<sup>146</sup>

Rentals are extant for the city council for 1564, for St Mary Steps for 1493 and for St Nicholas Priory from the years before 1535. They provide information on property held by city guilds, merchants and leading artisans as well as on shops, standings and occupations, though they are less full than the city rental of 1585.<sup>147</sup> The rental of Thomas Prestwood, a leading Exeter merchant, for 1573/4 is held at the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office. It provides details of his holdings and connections in Exeter and in Devon.<sup>148</sup> Exeter deeds are extant within the Exeter City, Devon county, and Cathedral archive collections. These have been used to provide details of property holding,

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<sup>142</sup> DHC, ECA, Exe Island Account Rolls; Misc.Roll 48 9/10 Henry VII, 5Edward VI-2/3 Philip and Mary, 4/5 9/10-12/13Eliz.I; Exe Island Court Rolls 11/12,12/13,16/17,Edward IV, 2/3 Richard III, 6-10 Henry VII, 11/12 Henry VII, 22/23 Henry VII, 2/3 Henry VIII, 18/19 Henry VIII,,34-38 Henry VIII, 3/4 -4/5 Philip and Mary, 8/9 Eliz.1 ; Duryard Manor Account Rolls 10-15 Edward IV, 16-20 Edward IV, 21/22 Edward IV,1/2 ,2 Richard III-I Henry VII, 1-18 Henry VII, 19/20 Henry VII, 23/24 Henry VII/I Henry VIII, 6/7 Henry VIII-9/10 Henry VIII, 13/14 Henry VIII-22/232 Henry VIII, 24-26 Henry VIII, 27-35 Henry VIII, 36 Henry VIII, 3/4 Eliz.1, 5/6 Eliz I.; St. Nicholas Fee Account Rolls 17/18 Henry VIII, 21/22 Henry VIII.

<sup>143</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 100.

<sup>144</sup> DHC, ECA AB IV ff. 3-187.

<sup>145</sup> These are discussed in Stoye, *Water*, pp. 189-190.

<sup>146</sup> DHC, ECA, Miscellaneous Rolls 15, 16, 16A.

<sup>147</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 186 A-B (City Council Rental 1564); Miscellaneous Roll 41 (St Nicholas Priory Rental); DD70904 (St Mary Steps Rental); Book 187 (1585 City Council Rental).

<sup>148</sup> West Devon Record Office, Plymouth, 72/279A.



marriages and re-marriages, shops and occupations.<sup>149</sup> The study of these for Tudor Exeter has been made a great deal easier by the deposit by Sue Reece at RAMM of her '*Index of Exeter Documents*' based on her research on the topography of Tudor Exeter.<sup>150</sup>

Ecclesiastical records have been largely beyond the scope of this study. In the Exeter Cathedral Archives some use was made of deeds, leases, and also of some of the Cathedral account rolls, searching for payments to tailors or embroiderers, but overall these were of less value.<sup>151</sup> Parish church records in the Devon Heritage Centre were a more useful source. Original parish registers were consulted for 11 Exeter parishes and also for St Thomas, just outside the city. However, only St Petrock and St Mary Arches have registers commencing in 1538, though they were two of the wealthiest parishes where a large number of the principal merchants lived. The marriage and burial registers were of most use in giving details of some of the leading citizens and their families as in showing how businesses were transferred through marriages and providing dates of decease for them. The St Petrock baptism registers between 1538 and 1546 record the occupations of fathers.<sup>152</sup> Six sets of Exeter churchwardens' accounts were examined. Four are extant from the 1470s and before, one from the 1530s and one for just one year in 1507/08. Churchwardens were identified and linked with the civic hierarchy and occupations.<sup>153</sup> The records of the

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<sup>149</sup> DHC, ECA, ED/M Exeter Deeds; DD Devon Deeds; Exeter Cathedral Archives; Exeter City Leases, Dean and Chapter Deeds, Records of the Custos and College of the Vicars Choral of Exeter Cathedral.

<sup>150</sup> Sue Reece, *Index of Exeter Documents 1450-1600* especially Deeds and lists of landowners, deposited in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, not dated.

<sup>151</sup> Exeter Cathedral Archives; Exeter City Leases 6006-6010; Dean and Chapter Deeds 28-29, 173-174, 188-205, 372, 468-469, 487, 491, Miscellaneous 2369, 2419-20, 2447. These can also be accessed via Stuart Moore's *Calendar of the Muniments and Library of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter*, Exeter Cathedral Archives, 1873; *Vicars Choral Leases and Related Documents* 21739, 3114, 3116-8, 3126, 3191, 3371, 21711, 21966.; *Account Rolls of the Stewards of the Exchequer of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter*, DC 2839-2844 (extant for 1474, 1477, 1514, 1515, 1517, 1524 and 1525). Ellie Jones, Cathedral Archivist, was very helpful in providing access to the account books in looking for material on the work of the Exeter tailors. Some of the cathedral records were useful in providing information on occupations. A.M. Erskine, 'The Medieval Financial Records of the Cathedral Church of Exeter', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 2, 6, October 1962, pp.254-266 was very helpful especially p.257.

<sup>152</sup> DHC, Exeter All Hallows Goldsmith Street PR1, St David PR1, Holy Trinity PR1, St Kerrian PR1, St Mary Arches PR1, St Mary Major PR1 and 2, St Paul PR1, St Petrock PR1, St Sidwell PR1, St Edmund PR1, St Thomas PR1.

<sup>153</sup> DHC, St Petrock PW1-3, St John's Bow DD 36767-36772, Holy Trinity PW 2-4, St Mary Major PW1, St Mary Arches PW1, St Mary Steps DD70896-70928, PW1-6. Whiting used them

religious fraternity of St George in Holy Trinity parish for the late 1470s and early 1480s also survive. These provided an insight into the workings of a religious guild at this time and by linking with other records it was possible to establish that it was one run by craftsmen, predominantly weavers and butchers.<sup>154</sup>

Within the National Archives the Exeter aulnage accounts were consulted. The use of them by Amor for Ipswich, and subsequently further afield, and by Hare for Salisbury and the Wiltshire towns indicate their potential as a source for looking at cloth sellers. This is despite the reservations about their veracity raised by Carus Wilson.<sup>155</sup> Manuscript Inquisitions Post Mortem were studied where no Devon and Cornwall Record Society transcript was available and they provided some information on the property held by merchants and on their marriages and families which could be linked with the wills and inventories of a few of the wealthiest citizens.<sup>156</sup> The household account books of the Countess of Devon for the early 1520s were used to ascertain if locally based merchants were selling commodities to the household and a few Exeter connections were identified.<sup>157</sup>

In London the recent opening of access to the Duchy of Cornwall Office provided the opportunity to establish the extent of survival of the Dartmouth Water Bailiffs' Accounts. These were used by Nicholls in her study of the Totnes and Dartmouth merchant communities between 1470 and 1530, completed in 1960.<sup>158</sup> In total 16 accounts were examined covering the years from 1508 to 1568.<sup>159</sup> They were useful in determining the extent to which Exeter merchants traded through the port of Dartmouth. These records are in good condition and

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in his study of the Reformation in the South West and his thesis was consulted: RWhiting, 'The Reformation in the South West of England', University of Exeter, Ph.D., 1977.

<sup>154</sup> DHC,1718add/PW2.

<sup>155</sup> Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*; id., *From Wool to Cloth: The Triumph of the Suffolk Clothier*, Bungay, 2016; J. Hare, *A Prospering Society: Wiltshire in the Later Middle Ages*, University of Hertfordshire, 2011; E. M. Carus Wilson, 'The Aulnage Accounts: A Criticism', *Economic History Review*, 2, 1929/30, pp.114-123.

<sup>156</sup> E A. Fry, ed., *A Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem for Cornwall and Devon from Henry III to Charles I, 1216-1649*, DCRS, 1, 1906; *Inquisitions Post Mortem, Devon and Cornwall Record Society Transcripts*, DHC, West Country Studies Library; TNA, C142, E150.

<sup>157</sup> TNA, E36/333, SP1/28.

<sup>158</sup> L.M. Nicholls, 'The Trading Community of Totnes and Dartmouth in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries', University of Exeter M.A., 1960.

<sup>159</sup> Duchy of Cornwall Office, London, Water Bailiffs Devon, Dartmouth, 1508-1568,/Doc/WBAcc/1-20 The series continues up to 1592.

are worthy of further study. This is less true of the Bridgwater Water Bailiffs' Accounts held at the Somerset Heritage Centre.<sup>160</sup> Six accounts are extant for the years between 1504 and 1565. They are in much worse condition and were less useful.

Artefacts did not form a major part of the plan of research. However, the tomb of Thomas Andrew from c.1517, in St Mary Arches church, has been previously overlooked in the study of Exeter's history. It provides evidence of the involvement of Exeter's traders in the London Merchant Adventurer's Company at this date. (Appendix 14) A seal of the Exeter Tailors' guild, dating from the late-fifteenth century was examined in the British Library.<sup>161</sup>

## **Conclusion**

One of the main challenges in this study has been the richness and quality of the material available. The method used has been to cross reference a wide range of sources thus illuminating their strengths and weaknesses. Some problems were encountered which were common to all studies of this period such as duplicate names and unreliable spelling. However, overall the main issue has been in deciding what to include. Some documents consulted are worthy of detailed studies in their own right. Others such as the High Court of Admiralty records in London and Mayors' Court rolls in Exeter have been put aside due to the constraints of time and word length.

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<sup>160</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton D//B/bw/1428-1441 Bridgwater Water Bailiffs' Accounts, 1504-1565.

<sup>161</sup> BL Additional, Seals, CL1, 41. It became part of their collection in the years between 1900 and 1905.

## CHAPTER 2: GOVERNMENT, SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND TRADE IN EXETER 1470-1570: AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This chapter provides a historical context for the thesis. The composition of the city government is discussed revealing how it changed from a wider body to one which was more merchant-dominated. Exeter's social structure is examined. This shows the existence of a small recognisable city elite. The analysis also demonstrates the importance of a growing middle stratum in Exeter's society which played a vital role in developing the city's prosperity. Also, below them, there was a large group of small-scale artisans who were taxpayers. It is argued that the taxation records do not really give us any insights into the very poor in society. The importance of aliens as artisans in the city rather than as traders is emphasised. Their origins were clearly linked with the predominant areas in the city's overseas trade. Women citizens were mainly recorded as property-holding widows. An overview of the development of Exeter's overseas and coastal traffic provides a context in which to locate the conclusions concerning the activities of Exeter's trading community.

### 2.1 The City Elite and Government

#### *The Form of Exeter's Government*

After 1450 Exeter's city government consisted of a common council of 24 members, supplemented by a body of 36 electors who were really only politically active in the choosing of the mayor.<sup>162</sup> The city rulers became an increasingly closed group in the last decades of the fifteenth century.<sup>163</sup> Changes made in 1496, probably confirmed by Henry VII on his visit to the city in 1497, brought about the eradication of this electoral body. This measure received Crown recognition in a privy seal writ of 1509 which confirmed the existence of a self co-opting governing body of 24 councillors all of whom were

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<sup>162</sup> Constitutional developments in Exeter have been discussed by a number of historians, most usefully: B. Wilkinson, *The Medieval Council of Exeter*, Manchester, 1931; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*; J. Youings, *Early Tudor Exeter: The Founders of the County of the City*, Exeter, 1974; Attreed, *King's Towns*.

<sup>163</sup> Attreed, *King's Towns*, pp.21-22, Kleineke, "'Kynges Cite'" pp.151-152; Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.100-108.

to be freemen and inhabitants of the city.<sup>164</sup> The councillors served for life unless poverty, disease or senility could be pleaded as a just case for their enforced retirement.<sup>165</sup> The chief executive officials, the mayor and the receiver, were chosen from members of the Twenty Four. They were to be assisted by three bailiffs who were not members of the council, though tenure of the office usually presupposed eventual election to it. Further changes took place in 1535 when the mayor and the ex-mayors were appointed ex-officio J.P.s and in 1537 when Exeter was made a separate county. The charter effecting the latter also created the new office of sheriff and the number of aldermen, a group which had existed since the fourteenth century and is discussed below, was fixed at eight.<sup>166</sup>

### *The Groupings within the City Elite*

Much of the previous study of Tudor Exeter's government has concentrated on its form rather than its composition. The study of its personnel gives us an insight into the city elite. The membership can be divided into four major groupings based on the civic offices which they held as shown in Table 2.1 below.

**TABLE 2.1 GROUPS WITHIN THE CITY ELITE IN THE CITY OF EXETER 1470-1570: HIGHEST OFFICE GAINED.**

GROUP	HIGHEST OFFICE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
A	MAYOR	80	26.4
B	RECEIVER OR SHERIFF	43	14.2
C	COUNCIL MEMBER	40	13.2
D	BAILIFF	140	46.2
TOTAL		303	

(Sources: M.M. Rowe and J. Cochlin, *Mayors of Exeter from the Thirteenth Century to the Present Day*, Exeter, 1964 pp.8-12; J.J. Alexander, 'The Leading Civic Officials of Exeter 1330-1537, *TDA*, 70, 1938, pp.412-415; 'The Earliest Sheriffs of Devon 1537-1553, *DCNQ*, 19, 1936/37 pp.297-299; W.T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540-1640*, pp.287-288; DHC, ECA, MCR 10/11 Edward IV-12/13 Elizabeth I).

<sup>164</sup> By self co-option members were added to the city council at the discretion of the council members when a vacancy occurred. The number of councillors never exceeded 24. Self co-option maintained stability and limited any potential opposition.

<sup>165</sup> The privy seal writ, ECA Charter XXX, is printed in Wilkinson, *Medieval Council*, pp.95-97.

<sup>166</sup> Youings, *Early Tudor Exeter*, pp. 17-18, 23; M. Weinbaum, *British Borough Charters 1307-1660*, Cambridge, 1943, pp.38-41.

The city officers themselves represented a very small section of its male population. This has been calculated as at most 3.5%, in the years from 1470-1570.<sup>167</sup>

### *The Composition of the City Council*

Few wealthier male citizens were not involved in the government of the city. In the Tenth of 1489 at least 26 persons were assessed to pay over 10s on their property and of these eight men held some senior civic office. Over three-quarters of the persons paying the "Anticipation" in 1523 served as city officers. The lay subsidy of 1544 raised over £213 in Exeter, of which more than £85 was paid by members of the council. If we add to this the contributions of the three bailiffs serving in 1544 the oligarchy was responsible for over £89, or nearly 42%, of the total payment. By the end of Mary's reign the lay subsidy of 1557/58 shows that the pattern was not substantially different. About two-thirds of those persons assessed at over £15 in goods or land were civic officials. Wealth was a vital factor in attaining civic office. John Wolcot finally became mayor in 1565, having become a member of the Twenty Four 40 years earlier. Hooker informs us that it was because of his age and "small welthe" that he had not been previously appointed mayor, but, in 1565 "order was taken both that his howse should be prepared and also he to be furnished with monye for his Dyet which lyberally the chamber dyd consider."<sup>168</sup>

The occupational structure of town councils usually mirrored the dominant trades in the local economies.<sup>169</sup> As Table 2.2 shows Exeter's was dominated by the distributive trades. 135 merchants or mercers gained civic office in the years from 1470 to 1570 accounting for nearly 45% of the total number. A further nine drapers, six chandlers, and two haberdashers can be added to this group.

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<sup>167</sup> If we assume that adult males over 24 lived for 20 years there would have been 5 population cohorts in a period of 100 years. In a population of 10,000 if 25% were adult males eligible for service in office then 2,500 x by 5 cohorts would give a total of 12,500 men. 303 office holders comprised 2.4% of this total. As the population of Exeter was probably much lower, nearer 7,000, this is an under-estimate. In this case the 303 identified office holders would make up 3.5% of the total. See 2.4 for a discussion of Exeter's population.

<sup>168</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.355a.

<sup>169</sup> Thus in Oxford the brewers and victuallers were dominant until the 1580s. Similarly the cloth industry in Worcester and the distributive trades in York provided the majority of the town's leading officials. C.I. Hammer, 'Anatomy of an Oligarchy: The Oxford Town Council in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Journal of British Studies*, 18, 1978, pp.22-23; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 92-110; Dyer, *City of Worcester*, pp.224-226.

**TABLE 2.2 THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE CITY ELITE 1470-1570**

TRADES	GROUP AS DEFINED IN TABLE 2.1 ABOVE				TOTAL
	A	B	C	D	
<b>DISTRIBUTIVE</b>					
Merchants + Mercers	52	23	20	40	135
Chandlers	1	2	2	1	6
Haberdashers	-	-	-	2	2
Drapers	2	4	1	2	9
<b>CLOTHING</b>					
Tailors	5	2	4	16	27
Cappers	-	-	1	1	2
<b>FOOD AND DRINK</b>					
Butchers	1	-	-	11	12
Bakers	1	-	-	5	6
Brewers	-	-	1	2	3
Fishers/Fishmongers	1	-	1	-	2
<b>LEATHER</b>					
Shoemakers	-	-	-	3	3
Saddlers	1	-	-	2	3
Skinners	-	-	-	1	1
Tanners	-	-	-	1	1
Curriers	-	1	-	-	1
<b>METAL</b>					
Goldsmiths	1	1	2	3	7
Bellfounders	1	1	-	2	4
Hoopers	-	-	-	1	1
<b>WOOD</b>					
Bowyers	-	1	1	1	3
<b>TEXTILES</b>					
Shearmen	-	-	-	1	1
Weavers	-	-	-	1	1
<b>BUILDING</b>					
Plumbers	-	-	1	1	2
<b>TRANSPORT</b>					
Carriers	-	-	-	1	1
<b>PROFESSIONAL</b>					
Apothecaries	-	1	1	2	4
Barbers	-	-	-	3	3
Surgeons	-	-	1	-	1
Notaries	-	-	-	1	1
<b>GENTLEMEN</b>					
(including lawyers, officials + yeomen)	12	3	2	11	28
<b>UNKNOWN</b>	2	4	2	25	33
<b>TOTAL</b>	80	43	40	140	303

(Sources:  
Mainly based

on *Exeter Freeman*)

Merchants were fairly evenly distributed throughout the civic hierarchy and attained the most senior and more junior positions. The second most politically important occupational group were the tailors of whom at least 27 entered the oligarchy. A number of these were, however, only city bailiffs and the five tailors who became mayor were all, by the time they attained office, also acting as general traders. There was an important group of gentry who were local officials such as Thomas Spurway, the Courtenays' General Receiver. Others, such as Thomas Calwodley, had legal training and office. These accounted for at least 27 members of the governing clique and nearly half of them became mayors.

Only ten occupations provided mayors. Prejudice against artisans was less distinct at the end of the fifteenth century when Richard Russell, a bellfounder, Robert Newton, a saddler, and Stephen Ruggeway, a butcher, became mayors in 1485, 1487 and 1489 respectively, though Newton and Russell participated in overseas trading. Most of the sixteenth century mayors were engaged in trade or were from gentry families. There were two notable exceptions: William Tothill (mayor in 1552) was referred to as a fisherman, fisher and fishmonger and William Smyth, (mayor in 1553 and a Catholic), was a goldsmith.<sup>170</sup> Goldsmiths were fully involved in the city's government. At least four were members of the Twenty Four and another three served as city bailiffs. The clearest example of prejudice is against butchers. Eleven became bailiffs but were not co-opted to the Twenty Four. A similar situation existed in York.<sup>171</sup> The same was broadly true in Exeter of leather workers and brewers. William Crugge, (originally a tanner who became a merchant) and William Periam (a capper who became a merchant) only progressed when they were traders. No person engaged in the textile industries sat on the council. Only one shearman and one weaver served as bailiffs in the whole period. This is striking at a time when textile manufacturing was gaining greater importance within the city's economy. Finally eight medical men took office but none of them became mayor, although

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<sup>170</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, pp.65, 70, 80; *Tudor Exeter*, p.42; DHC, ECA, ABI ff.121b,172b; Book 51 f.350b; ED/M/1011, 1117; TNA C1/888/25-26, C1/1074/37-38.

<sup>171</sup> Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.106. Twelve butchers became members of the Twenty Four but not one became an alderman.



Nicholas Lymet, an apothecary, did become receiver in 1546, though he was also a trader and ship-owner.

Civic office was open to a wider variety of occupations in the late fifteenth century but by Elizabeth's reign Exeter was merchant dominated. This was confirmed by tracing the number of civic officers who appear as traders in the particulars of customs accounts over the century. In total at least 47% of the council and nearly 58% of the mayors were trading overseas. By the sixteenth century the council was more exclusive than in most provincial towns in terms of the number of trades represented. In the century after 1470 only ten trades provided mayors compared to twice that number in Winchester between 1520 and 1609. In sixteenth century York 18 trades were represented on the aldermanic bench.<sup>172</sup> However, in total, 28 trades were admitted to Exeter's wider elite (that including the bailiffs as well as the city councillors) such as a hooper, a plumber and a carrier. This is roughly comparable to the 33 trades which were represented on the Twenty Four in York.<sup>173</sup> In all the towns the lower reaches of urban government were open to men from a wider range of occupations.

### *The Outer Ring of the Elite: The City Bailiffs*

The scope of Exeter's elite has been widened here by the inclusion of the city bailiffs. Appointment as a bailiff, however, marked acceptance into the governing clique. Elected by the Twenty Four the men chosen were designated as candidates for co-option to the council, which often followed within a few years when a vacancy arose.<sup>174</sup> The bailiffs must have fulfilled the basic requirements of wealth and occupation for service on the city council. Some of these men had already proved their administrative ability within their craft guilds. The records of the tailors and the weavers and tuckers are complete enough before 1570 to make investigations possible. At least 31 officers of the Tailors' guild also served as city officials between 1478 and 1570. For the tailors

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<sup>172</sup> A. Rosen, 'Economic and Social Aspects of the History of Winchester, 1520-1670', University of Oxford D.Phil., 1975, p.170; Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.106.

<sup>173</sup> Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 61-62, 106-107.

<sup>174</sup> This contrasts with Bristol where bailiffs were only appointed after they became members of the council in the fifteenth century: P. Fleming, *Time, Space and Power in Late Medieval Bristol* at <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/OutputFile/924989>

mastership of their craft guild was almost a prerequisite for civic office. The city bailiffship was attained by the guild masters on average four years after their first terms as masters. A few of the more prominent masters served as city bailiff in the following year and two did so co-terminously.<sup>175</sup> In the case of the weavers, tuckers and shearmen the situation is very different. Only one of the known masters before 1570 took on city office.<sup>176</sup>

It is not entirely clear why individuals were co-opted to the council. It seems likely that they apprentices of prominent merchants were undertaking promising business ventures, made advantageous marriages or took on more minor civic offices such as the wardenship of the Exe Bridge.<sup>177</sup> Two wardens of the Exe Bridge were appointed each year. Of 114 known wardens in the century from 1470 to 1570 nearly a half became bailiffs and although about a quarter never gained civic office the remaining quarter went on from the bailiffship to become senior executive officials in the city.<sup>178</sup>

### *The Inner Ring: Higher Civic Office in Exeter*

Membership of the town council (or the Twenty Four) did not automatically lead to higher civic office. Of the 91 councillors co-opted in the years from 1510 to 1567 32 (or 35%) did not take on any more civic responsibilities. Most of these tended to be men with shorter municipal lifespan. Long continued council attendance usually led to the receivership or the shrievalty. On average, the receivership was gained at least 7 years after co-option. The shrievalty often followed on consecutively from the receivership.<sup>179</sup> A study of the occupations of the sheriffs shows that whereas in the 1540s six were non-merchants this had fallen to three in the 1550s and two in the 1560s. Merchant domination was asserted over the office especially when for seven consecutive years between

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<sup>175</sup> William Wilkinson in 1498 and John Bridgeman in 1515.

<sup>176</sup> This was John Lane, a weaver, who was guild warden in 1540 and master in 1544 or possibly earlier, and who had served as city bailiff in 1536.

<sup>177</sup> The wardenship of Exe Bridge was a responsible position involving control over the maintenance of the bridge and also of a number of city properties including the Crikelpit mills and so provided appropriate training for higher civic office.

<sup>178</sup> DHC, ECA, Exe Bridge Wardens Accounts 1470-1570; Kowalseki, *Local Markets*, p.341.

<sup>179</sup> Alexander, 'Earliest Sheriffs'; Youings, *Early Tudor Exeter*, pp.21-22 also commented on the first few sheriffs in her study of the founding of the county of Exeter and noted that the first sheriffs were not merchants.

1556 and 1562 leading traders took on the office. The office of Sheriff became almost a pre-requisite for the mayoralty. Between 1542 and 1570 16 of a total of 30 Sheriffs went on to be mayors and a further six had died before the date they might have become mayor. The other Sheriffs were three tailor/drapers, three gentlemen/lawyers, two goldsmiths and a bowyer and so they mostly represented the next most influential groups within the city elite.

The mayoralty was on average attained about ten years after co-option to the Twenty Four. This was more rapid than Fleming calculated in Bristol.<sup>180</sup> The mayoralty carried the most elevated status though no Exeter mayor in this period was knighted by the monarch. Nor was there any notion that the mayoral position conferred any gentle status as in some other towns.<sup>181</sup> The mayor of Exeter received a pension during his term of office which increased substantially between 1470 and 1564.<sup>182</sup>

The other chief officials, the receiver and the three bailiffs, received no commensurate increase.<sup>183</sup> They were token payments but there was a recognition of the increased expenses of the mayor in his year of office. The Exeter mayor's pension compares favourably with that in other towns.<sup>184</sup> In 1564 the Exeter council noted that because the mayoralty 'hath benne verie chardgable and so of late yeres hath increased and likely to increase more and more'" no mayor was to serve for a further term of office for eight years.<sup>185</sup> The mayor was presented very much as the embodiment of the city in dealing with royal visitors. He was also presented in a similar manner when the city was

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<sup>180</sup> Fleming, *Time, Space and Power* <https://uwerepository.worktribe.com/OutputFile/924989> calculated that the average age of bailiffs was in their late twenties. He cites Lee who calculated that between 1470 and 1499 the shrievalty followed 8 years after this and that a first mayoralty was gained in about six further years.

<sup>181</sup> R. Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry' in J.A.F. Thomson ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, Gloucester, 1988, pp.32-33.

<sup>182</sup> DHC, ECA, Receiver's Rolls. By 1470 the mayor was paid 20 marks (£13 6s 8d) which in 1499 was increased to £20. A further £6 13s 4d was added in 1524. As inflation became a serious problem the pension was increased to £40 in 1556 and again to 100 marks (£66 13s 4d) in 1564. The term pension here was used in the Receiver's Rolls to denote an annual payment for service and to help to fund the work of the mayor.

<sup>183</sup> DHC, ECA, Receiver's Rolls 1470-1570. In 1500 the receiver's fee was reduced from 40s to 39s and that of the three bailiffs from 20s to 19s each.

<sup>184</sup> In the larger Norwich it remained at £20 until 1566 and in Winchester at £20 until 1621. Pound, *Tudor and Stuart Norwich*, p.103; Rosen, 'Economic and Social Aspects', pp.121-122.

<sup>185</sup> DHC, ECA, AB III f.150.

facing civic disturbances. The mayor's feasts were the most important of those provided by the civic officials. In 1571 the mayor was provided with a cook who was to have a salary of £3 and a gown.<sup>186</sup> The mayor had a priest (by the 1530s called the chaplain) who in 1516 was provided with a summer livery along with the sergeants, the sword-bearer and the city waits. All these officers would have attended the mayor on civic occasions and added to the prestige of his office.<sup>187</sup>

Exeter mayors, after the completion of their term of office, often gained other perquisites. In the late fifteenth century gifts of canon bread made to the past mayors were recorded in the receiver's rolls. There were usually between six and ten recipients.<sup>188</sup> The mayoralty of the Staple was also a progression for former mayors. By the 1520s Staple mayors were retiring city mayors or had held that office only a few years before.<sup>189</sup> After the mayoralty councillors also progressed to offices such as the Wardenship of the Magdalen, the leper hospital outside the South Gate. Seventeen wardens of the Magdalen are known between 1540 and 1570. Most of them were retiring mayors and all of them were past mayors.<sup>190</sup>

There was an inner-most core within the town council of 'aldermen'. From 1508 in the lists of those attending each council meeting the first few men named are referred to as 'Mr' or in a few instances 'Master'. This is also true of the list extant from December 1506. These were the 'aldermen' and were senior

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<sup>186</sup> The cook was Nicholas Robinson who was admitted to the freedom in 1575 without any payment in consideration of his good service: DHC, ECA, AB III f.269; *Exeter Freeman*, p. 92.

<sup>187</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I f.57b.

<sup>188</sup> DHC, ECA, Receiver's Rolls 11/12 Edward IV-10/11 Henry VII.

<sup>189</sup> DHC, ECA, Miscellaneous Rolls 14,15,16,16A The Staple Courts made provision for the enrolment of mercantile debts in the major English towns. In Exeter bailiffs and constables assisted its mayor as officials. The Staple courts were a major source of security for English merchants in the late medieval and early modern period. No domination of the office, by holding it successively for several years, took place as it did in the mid fifteenth century. By the sixteenth century the Staple appears to have been under the control of the city Chamber rather than under that of the merchants as such. City councillors who served as Staple officials were not all merchants and they included legal officials and craftsmen such as waxchandlers and tailors. Such men were, however, the leading men of their crafts and did not represent the mass of the artisan group.

<sup>190</sup> DHC, ECA, ED/MAG/108-112; Miscellaneous Roll 62; TNA, CI/546/17. A list of the wardens of the Magdalen has been compiled using my own information from the Exe Bridge Wardens Accounts and Martin Cook's unpublished examination of the extant Magdalen Account Rolls. Seventeen wardens of the Magdalen are known between 1540 and 1570. Most of them were retiring mayors and all of them were past mayors. This replaced an earlier system of one leading citizen holding the office for a number of years.

members of the council. In the first few instances only between three and six councillors were designated as 'Mr.' but by the early 1520s there were usually eight, or sometimes seven or nine. They were the ex-mayors. Kowaleski notes that the office of alderman did exist in the fourteenth century but that they were 'only wardsmen with few powers'. Not much is known of them, as a group, before the granting of new city charters in 1535 and 1537.<sup>191</sup> A pair of aldermen was assigned to each city quarter. As seen in Table 2.3 throughout the period the office was dominated by merchants or men who became merchants. Few artisans or gentry reached the aldermanic rank.

**TABLE 2.3 OCCUPATIONS OF THE ALDERMEN IN EXETER 1510-1570**

YEAR	1510	1520	1530	1540	1550	1560	1570
<b>OCCUPATION</b>							
<b>MERCANTILE OCCUPATIONS</b>							
MERCHANT	4	3	2	4	4	5	7
MERCHANT-MERCER			1	1	1		
MERCHANT-VINTNER							1
TAILOR-MERCHANT	1		1				
TANNER-MERCHANT	1	1					
WAXCHANDLER-MERCHANT	1						
CAPPER-MERCHANT				1	1		
GENTLEMAN-MERCHANT		1					
GENTLEMAN-MERCER					1	1	
<b>ARTISAN OCCUPATIONS</b>							
TAILOR/DRAPER					1		
TAILOR			2	1			
BAKER		1					
WAXCHANDLER			1				
FISHERMAN/FISHER/YEOMAN					1		
<b>GENTRY</b>							
GENTLEMAN	2		1			1	
ESQUIRE/GENTLEMAN	1	1					
GENTLEMAN/ OFFICIAL			1	1			1

(Source: Aldermen selected from meeting lists in ECA Act Books at ten year intervals: DHC, ECA, AB 1-1V)

As the sixteenth century progressed they became increasingly involved with the maintenance of social discipline and order in the wards to which they were each

<sup>191</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.103; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.29, 47-48,90-92; Youings, *Early Tudor Exeter*, p.23

assigned. This inner council of the city government was mirrored in the Tailors' guild where the 'eight men' held sway, even over the current officials.

### *The Changing Business of the Council*

The city council was usually referred to as the Twenty Four by contemporaries. The nature of its business did not change substantially over the period studied. A comparison was made across four samples of fourteen meetings centring on the years 1508, 1533, 1554 and 1570. The Act Books record briefly the decisions reached on a range of issues. In the earliest year there was more focus on city offices but this declined (from 67% to 26%). Matters relating to city owned property became much more important (7% to 27% in 1554) and payments made by the city council were more represented in the 'acta' (from 7% to 19% in 1554). Economic regulation by the city council also reached a peak in 1554 (22%) though matters which could be called social regulation fluctuated (reaching the highest point of 13% in 1533). The most significant trend overall was a rising concern with property and finance.

Attreed traced Exeter's municipal gifts and patronage expenses in the years from 1377 to 1509 and showed how they increased in the reign of Richard III in particular, but were significantly lower and more focussed under Henry VII. She concluded that 'Exeter's finances were in good shape'.<sup>192</sup> Kleinecke, in his study of the impact of the War of the Roses, noted that although corporate funds were sometimes insufficient there is no suggestion that they had difficulty in raising loans.<sup>193</sup> Exeter's attitude to the later-fifteenth century political upheavals was pragmatic and concerned with maintaining allegiance to the Crown, unlike Bristol's Lancastrian sympathies in 1471 or York's support of Richard III.<sup>194</sup> In the next century the city maintained its support for the Crown at the time of the

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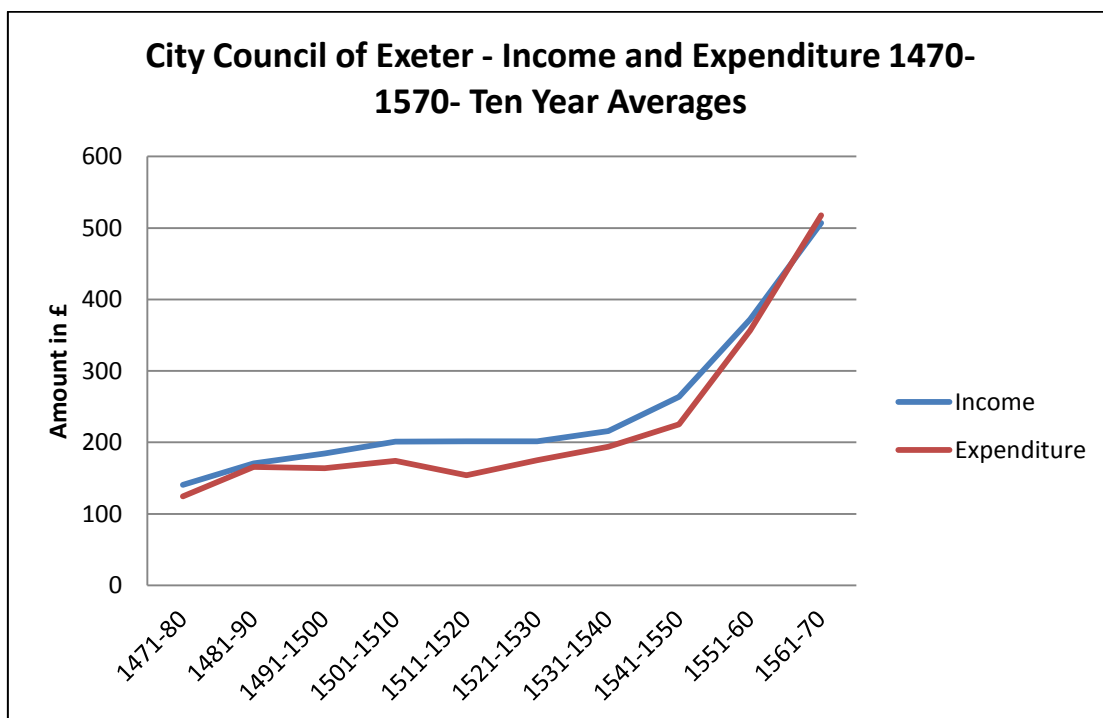
<sup>192</sup> Attreed, *King's Towns*, pp. 102, 111, 138-139, 142, 185. For the years from 1377 to 1509 she calculated expenses as a percentage of receipt and demonstrated that city expenses were greater in the later fifteenth century than earlier but only in Richard III's reign were they very high and in 1484/85 they actually reached 102%. Higher expenses were caused especially by the visits of Richard III in 1483 and Henry VII in 1497, Warbeck's attack, wall repairs, the rebuilding of the West Gate and extensive repairs to the East Gate. See also Kleinecke, "The Kynges Cite", p. 147.

<sup>193</sup> Kleinecke, *Exeter and the War of the Roses*, p. 147.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. p. 156.

siege of Exeter during the Western Rebellion in 1549.<sup>195</sup> The city's finances remained healthy until the 1550s when expenditure began to exceed income as the projects established by the council became more ambitious. Ten-year averages of city income and expenditure calculated from the Receiver's Rolls indicate that increases in expenditure were really significant by the 1530s but becoming a serious problem for the city council by the middle of the century (see Graph/Table below) The considerable effects of inflation would have mostly accounted for this. The extent of the impact of inflation has most fully been considered for York where the city government was battling financial problems vigorously by the 1550s.<sup>196</sup>

**GRAPH 2.1 CITY COUNCIL - INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 1470-1570: TEN-YEAR AVERAGES**



(Source: DHC, ECA, Exeter Receiver's Accounts 10/11 Edward IV- 11/12 Elizabeth I)

<sup>195</sup>M.Stoyle, ‘“Kill all the gentlemen”? (Mis) representing the western rebels of 1549’, *Historical Research*, 92: 255, 2019, 53; A. Fletcher and D. MacCulloch, *TudorRebellions*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Harlow, 1997, p.56

<sup>196</sup>Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp.224-225.

## EXETER CITY COUNCIL INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 1470-1570: TEN YEAR AVERAGES

YEAR	INCOME - £	EXPENDITURE- £
1471-1480	£140 11s 5d	£124 11s 5d
1481-1490	£170 13s 5d	£165 12s 7d
1491-1500	£184 12s	£164 2s
1501-1510	£201 4s 5d	£174 5s 9d
1511-1520	£201 2s 7d	£154
1521-1530	£201 11s 2d	£174 17s 7d
1531-1540	£215 13s 5d	£193 17s 9d
1541-1550	£263 12s	£225 8s
1551-1560	£372 6s	£356 14s
1561-1570	£506.16s	£517 12s

(Source: DHC, Exeter Receiver's Accounts 10/11 Edward IV-11/12 Elizabeth1)

### *The Social Origins of the City Elite*

The success of councils in Tudor cities rested upon extensive social mobility. Councils were open: new families were always being recruited and office-holding dynasties of three generations or more were exceptional. In Exeter of 303 men who held civic office between 1470 and 1570 at least 153 (over 50%) entered the freedom by paying a fine and were therefore likely to have been migrants to the city. In total 27% of the elite had entered the freedom by apprenticeship and may have been born in the city, though a number of apprentices were migrants. Exeter was a focal point for betterment migration and the council was open to the ambitious tradesmen. Families holding civic office for three generations were unknown. The same surname occurs three times in eleven cases over the period as a whole but most of the families were only represented in two generations.<sup>197</sup> In 1534 the council confirmed the practice by which the eldest sons of the councillors were to be granted the city freedom without paying a fine but only 15 members of the council were admitted to the freedom by succession in the century after 1470, suggesting that membership of the elite did not frequently pass from one generation to the next.<sup>198</sup> The social and geographical origins of the ruling class were very varied, as MacCaffrey has shown.<sup>199</sup>

The social origins of all the men who held the mayoralty between 1470 and 1570 were analysed over four 25 year periods. In each of the periods between

<sup>197</sup> The surnames Germyn, Colshill, Russell, Andrew, Hunt, Martyn, Blackall, Prestwood, Thomas, Bonyfant and Nordon occur three times.

<sup>198</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I f. 138a.

<sup>199</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.256-259.



four and six of the Exeter mayors were from gentry families (less than a quarter). Further in the same 25 year periods between eight and thirteen mayors could be traced as being from mercantile or artisan families (at most a half). The origins of some mayors cannot be determined precisely. No major changes are evident. It is, however, clear that a significant number of Exeter mayors did come from gentry families over the period as a whole. The range of gentry-status was considerable. Richard Martin, mayor in 1533, was the second son of Sir William Martin of Athelhampton in Dorset and Hooker saw his family as baronial. Others were from far less elevated background.<sup>200</sup> Nearly all were from Devon though exceptions were from further afield such as Suffolk, Wales and Cheshire as well as more locally from Dorset and Somerset.

### *Governing Dynasties in Exeter*

In the century after 1470 seven families provided two mayors each. No family provided three mayors. It was the later Elizabethan period which saw greater family domination of the council by such families as the Spicers, the Martins and the Chapells. From 1470 to 1570 60 surnames, or probable families, provided mayors compared to 33 in the previous century and 62 in the years from 1570 to 1670. Comparisons are, however, made difficult by the Chamber Act of 1564 which inaugurated the practice whereby a mayor was only to serve once in every eight years. Personal domination of the office had been rife in the earlier fifteenth century.<sup>201</sup> John Atwyll was mayor five times between 1476 and 1496, William Crugge (mayor four times between 1505 and 1518) and William Hurst (mayor five times between 1524 and 1561) continued this medieval style of domination. By the later-sixteenth century, however, a transition had taken place from personal to family domination of the council as increased life expectancy rates and larger families led to an increase in family participation in urban government. In the earlier period few mayors had a son or a male relative serving on the city council.

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<sup>200</sup> Hooker in his biography of John Atwyll, five times mayor in the years from 1476 to 1496, states that 'he was a gentleman borne as were the most parte of the mayers of this cite yn these days', thus acknowledging the way in which the gentry were able to become members of the city's governing elite: DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.328b-329a.

<sup>201</sup> Hugh Germyn had served as mayor nine times between 1443 and 1474. Robert and William Wilford occupied the mayoralty twenty times between 1373 and 1412.

### *The Elite and the Exeter MP's*

Those at the forefront of Exeter's elite also aspired to serve the city in a wider capacity in national government.<sup>202</sup> Exeter had two MPs. In the Yorkist era most were city merchants or men who have been described by some historians as 'clothiers' but who appear in the customs accounts as overseas traders and most were leading Exeter men.<sup>203</sup> Two lawyers also served Exeter as its MP at this time: Thomas Calwodley was the dominant legal figure and MP three times. This pattern continued into the reign of Henry VII when five of the seven Exeter MP's were overseas traders and have been identified as merchants, or in the case of Robert Newton, as a saddler who became a merchant. The two others were lawyers elected in 1504.

In the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI the MPs were still predominantly men identified as the principal merchants in the customs accounts.<sup>204</sup> In some Parliaments merchants provided both city MPs.<sup>205</sup> In the other years lawyers, gentlemen, customs and estate officials took up one of the posts. These were still Exeter men. They served as mayors and were involved in city life.<sup>206</sup> A change only really becomes apparent in the 1540s when John Pasmore, a lawyer from the Tiverton area residing in Halberton and London, and so with less connection with the city, became an MP in the 1543 by-election.

Parliamentary representation of the city by its merchants changed dramatically under Mary Tudor. Only one of the MPs in the reign was an overseas trader. Only one other MP served as a mayor and he was not a trader. Richard Hert was the long serving town clerk and a pronounced Catholic and the other MPs

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<sup>202</sup> J.J. Alexander, 'Proposed List of Exeter M.P.s', *TDA*, 59, 60, 61, 1927, 1928, 1929; J.Wedgwood, *History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the Commons House 1439-1509*, London, 1936; S. Bindoff, ed., *The House of Commons 1509-1558*, London, 1982; [www.historyofparliamentonline.org](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org)

<sup>203</sup> Wedgwood, *History*, pp.191-192; Alexander, 'Proposed List'; TNA C1/154/58; *Exeter Freeman*, p.55; *Tudor Exeter*, p.3. However, William Fokeray was a Dartmouth merchant and customer who went on to serve as mayor and MP for that town, though he did hold some land outside the East Gate of Exeter. Wedgwood, *History*, pp.342-343; Alexander 'Proposed List'; Exeter Cathedral Archives, Dean and Chapter Deeds 468.

<sup>204</sup> Such as Thomas Andrew, John Symon, William Hurst and Gilbert Kirk.

<sup>205</sup> Such as in 1512-14, 1514-15, most of the Reformation Parliament from 1529 up to a by-election in 1534, and in the last three years of the 1547-1552 Parliament (after the by-election of 1549).

<sup>206</sup> Such as John Noseworthy, Robert Hooker and Thomas Spurway. John Hull did not serve on the city council but he was from a gentry family residing at Larkbeare, outside the South Gate. He was a customs official and his father had been a merchant and had reached the receivership.

were Catholic gentry lawyers. In the first two Parliaments of Elizabeth's reign only one of Exeter's MPs, Richard Prestwood, was a city councillor and merchant.<sup>207</sup> The other four MPs were either lawyers or gentry. These men were very influential or experienced men. Thomas Williams was the Speaker of the Commons, Sir Peter Carew was from a leading Devon family and John Pollard had already represented two other Devon constituencies and was to move on to serve a Cornish one.<sup>208</sup> Although Exeter's city councillors were not in Parliament they had secured more prominent figures to represent them and the city Act Books record gifts made to them such as the substantial sum of £20 paid to Thomas Williams in 1563.<sup>209</sup> Overall in the years from 1540 to 1570 the men at the centre of the city council were not those who served as its MPs, in marked contrast to the years before 1540. This was partly due to the choice of known Catholics in Mary's reign but also must in part be due to the council's desire to seek the most influential representation in the first Elizabethan Parliaments. Eleven MPs served Exeter in the remaining eight Elizabethan Parliaments, of whom six were merchants and five were lawyers or officials.<sup>210</sup> With a more secure merchant oligarchy in place then, the principal merchant members of the Twenty Four again secured election but more in partnership with leading lawyers and officials than had been the case in earlier years.

Exeter became more exclusive than many towns in the number of trades which participated in its inner government. A wider governing group in the later-fifteenth century gave way to one dominated by the distributive trades. The continuity of the oligarchy became one of occupation rather than families in this period. By the mid-sixteenth century the city was becoming a more complex place to govern as civic expenditure rose and responsibilities widened. The city's links with central government, through its choice of MPs, became both more politically responsive and strategic under its merchant elite by that time.

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<sup>207</sup> Richard Prestwood was a merchant on the ascendant in the city who served as both Sheriff and MP in 1559 but he died in 1566 before he attained the mayoralty. His elder brother and his nephew, Thomas Prestwood I (in 1544 and 1550) and Thomas Prestwood II (in 1576) were both mayors.

<sup>208</sup> [www.historyofparliamentonline.org/](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/).

<sup>209</sup> DHC, ECA, ABIII f.98.

<sup>210</sup> Alexander, 'Proposed List'.

## 2.2 The Social Context

### *Introduction*

Taxation records are the main vehicle used here to explain the city's social structure. The Tenth of 1489, the Military Survey of 1522 and the lay subsidies of the 1520s, 40s and 50s are discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>211</sup> Tax payments were graded according to wealth, the wealthiest paying more per pound (£) assessed, so they can be used to compose a model social structure for a community. The key themes explored here are the distribution of wealth in the city, relating this to individuals, parishes and occupations. The position of resident aliens and women taxpayers are examined. The city parishes in the sixteenth century are shown in the map below. There is a focus on the city elite and on the middling and lower assessments, especially exploring them as servants, apprentices and wage workers and a consideration of the extent to which the poor are captured by these records at all. There was a considerable inequality and polarisation of wealth.

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<sup>211</sup> See 1.5; DHC, ECA, Z6. [www.englishimmigrants.com](http://www.englishimmigrants.com) is the database provided on-line by the University of York, the National Archives and the Humanities Institute of the University of Sheffield;. The edition of the subsidy published here was used. DHC ECA Book 156a; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.vii-ix,ix-xii, pp. xii-xviii pp.. 1-5; 7-33, 35-59; Stoate, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*, pp.67-68,77,80; TNA E179/97/186; /99/283, 99/284; DHC,ECA,AB II f.68b.

**MAP 2.1 EXETER CITY PARISHES**



Table 2.4 summarises the major existing studies of Exeter's social structure. The emphasis in them has been very much on the wealthy and the poor in society. Although both groups will be discussed below there is also a fuller discussion of the economically important middling groups.

**TABLE 2.4 SOCIAL STRUCTURE - HISTORIOGRAPHY**

<b>HISTORIAN</b>	<b>YEARS</b>	<b>ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE</b>
W.T. MacCaffrey (1958)	1524/25	an 'upper class' of about 6% of the population, a 'middle class' of at most 20%, a poorer group (assessed on £1 or £2 of goods and wages) of about 60% with a submerged group, who were not included in the tax assessment at all, of about 35%.
W.G. Hoskins (1960)	1522	at the top 'a rich merchant class' having at its peak a wealthy elite of 60 inhabitants taxed at over £40, some having 'a fortune' and others 'rich men' then 'a comfortable level' identified a 'craftsman and shopkeeper' class of about a third of the taxed he saw half of the remainder as low wage earners 'poor or very poor....having literally nothing that could be taxed'. 40%.
J. Cornwall (1988)	1522	Just under half of Exeter's wealth belonged to citizens assessed to pay on over £100 of goods. 20 citizens (3%) rated at £100-£300. A further 16-19% belonging to those assessed at between £40 and £99. 48% of the subsidy assessments in 1524/25 at Exeter were at £1, mostly on wages who were in employment but very poor.
K. Osborne (2016)	1586	38% of the wealth of the inhabitants assessed.... was held by merchants and cloth

		retailers 21% of it by gentlemen. cloth producers held 8%, food traders 7% other trades 7%.
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(Sources: MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.247-251; Hoskins, *Two Thousand Years in Exeter*, Chichester, 1960 pp.51-52; J.Cornwall, *Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth-Century England*, London, 1988, pp.62-63; Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp.49, 76-78, 81-85).

Appendix 2 provides an analysis of the distribution of wealth by parish in Exeter in 1522. Appendix 3 gives a detailed comparison of this with that shown in the lay subsidies in 1524/25. These can be compared with the analyses of the distribution of wealth and of the tax assessments for 1524/25 conducted by MacCaffrey.<sup>212</sup> Appendix 2 shows an elite in 1522 (taxpayers assessed on over £40) of 6% of the taxed population, a middling group (£5-£19 assessments) of over 17%, a lesser citizenry (£2-under £1) of over 24% and over 40% of those included as 'nil' assessments. Appendix 3 compares the Military Survey with the 1524/25 lay subsidies and shows that the survey was a fuller return. Many taxpayers (47% and 48%) were only listed in one of the tax returns (thus suggesting that neither gives us a really full picture). Many of those people assessed in 1522 as 'nil' returners were not included in the lay subsidies (69%) For those taxpayers listed in both returns assessments were generally higher in 1524/25 (57%).

Tables 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 provide an analysis of the social structure of the elite in Exeter in the years from 1522 to 1557. They show the existence of an elite of around 4-6% of taxpayers and a group of between 5-8% of substantial citizens below them. A group of master craftsmen and tradesmen and some lesser merchants, comprising 17-22% of taxpayers, have been identified for the 1520s and 40s but it is at this level that the 1557 subsidy becomes less useful as a comparison. Comparisons with the 1557 subsidy are of less validity as the criteria for tax assessment at this level were so different. The same is true for the varied group of minor craftsmen, better paid wage workers and servants, assessed on £1-£4 and comprising about 29% of the taxpayers. The 'nil'

<sup>212</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.248-250.

assessments of 1522 and those assessed on under £2 in 1544, about 40% of the taxpayers, were the vulnerable and poor but not the destitute. There is a good amount of agreement with MacCaffrey's analysis, based on the lay subsidy for 1524/5, but a difference of interpretation of the lower levels of taxpayers. This will be explored further below

**TABLE 2.5 DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN EXETER IN 1522**

ASSESSMENT LEVEL IN £	NUMBER OF PERSONS ASSESSED	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PERSONS ASSESSED
OVER £100	25	2.62
£40-£99	31	3.24
£20-£39	46	4.81
£5-£19	164	17.50
£1-£4	281	29.40
NIL ASSESSMENT	388	40.59
UNKNOWN ASSESSMENT	21	2.20

(Source: Military Survey 1522 in *Tudor Exeter* pp7-33, DHC, ECA, Book 156a)

**TABLE 2.6 DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN EXETER IN 1544**

LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT	NUMBER OF TAXPAYERS	PERCENTAGE
£100-400MARKS(£266 13s 4d))	14	1.44
£40-£99	39	4
£20-£39	67	6.89
£10-£19	96	9.87
£5-£9	120	12.33
OVER £2-£4	109	11.2
£2	159	16.34
UNDER £2	347	35.66
NOT RECORDED	22	2.26

(Source: *Tudor Exeter* pp. 45-54).

**TABLE 2.7 DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN EXETER – 1557**

LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT	NUMBER OF TAXPAYERS	PERCENTAGE
£100 AND MORE	1	0.36
£40-£99	9	3.26
£20-39	21	7.61
£10-£19	55	19.93
£5-£9	134	48.55
OVER £2-£4	20	7.25
UNDER £2	9	3.26
ALIEN 8d RATE	27	9.78
NOT RECORDED	0	0

(Source: *Tudor Exeter*, pp.55-59)

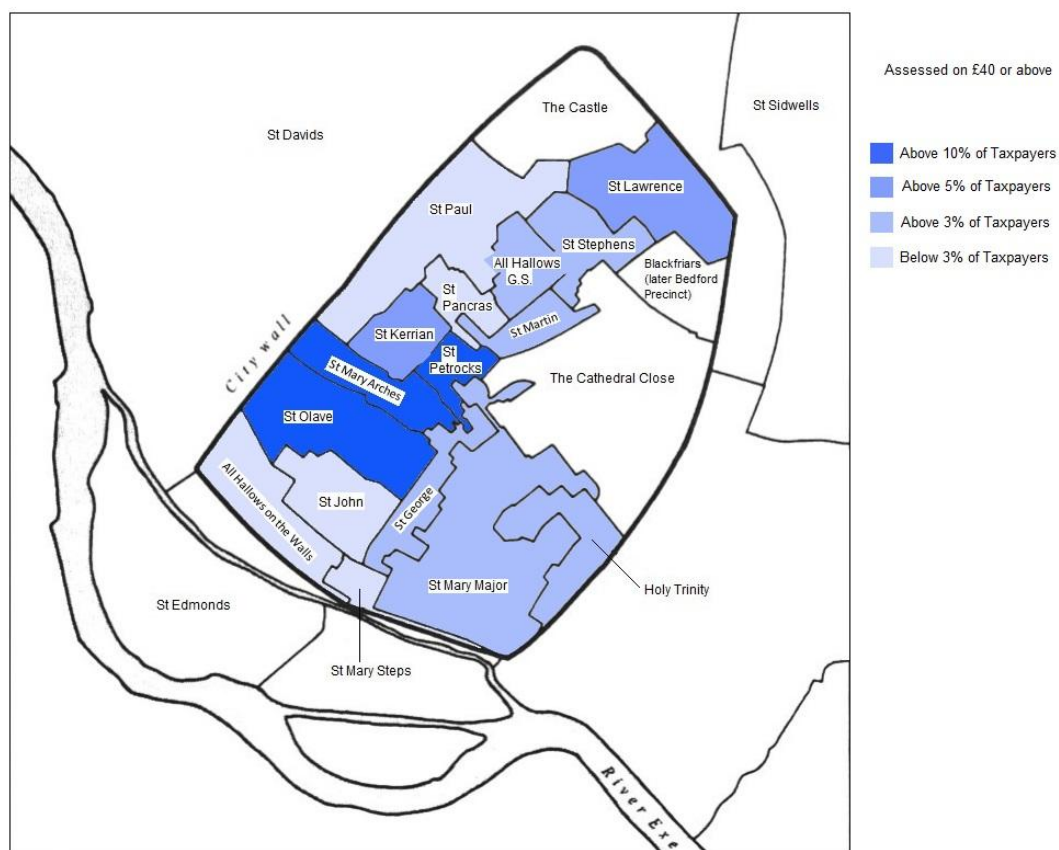
The maps below show the geographical distribution of wealth in Exeter and that St Petrock was the centre of the city's wealth. St Mary Arches was the other



parish which consistently had the richer residents. St Olave's completed a trio of prosperous central parishes in 1522. By 1544 the small parish of St Pancras as well as St George, which contained a number of prosperous tradesmen, were amongst the wealthiest parishes. Increasingly by the mid-sixteenth century parishes further up the High Street such as St Stephen and St Martin became more attractive to the better off. St Mary Major was the most populated but not the poorest, though it may have been becoming more so. The concentration of the poorer parishes was on the western edge of the city such as All Hallows on The Walls, St Mary Steps and St John. These were joined later by the extramural St Sidwell to the east of the city.

## MAP 2.2

The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in Exeter Parishes - 1522 - The Wealthiest Parishes



## MAP 2.3

The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in Exeter Parishes - 1544 - The Wealthiest Parishes



### *Exeter's Population*

Kowaleski saw mid and late-fifteenth century population growth in Exeter and that it must have increased substantially between the murage tax of 1377 and the Tenth of 1489.<sup>213</sup> The lay subsidy returns of the 1520s have been used to calculate total populations for the English towns and a number of methods and multipliers have been tested on the available material. MacCaffrey's 7,500 to 8,500 in the 1520s could be too high.<sup>214</sup> Dyer calculates the population as 6,825 for this period.<sup>215</sup> Barry concluded that there is general agreement that Exeter

<sup>213</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.88.

<sup>214</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.289-290.

<sup>215</sup> A. Dyer, *Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400-1600*, London, 1991, p.72.

in the 1520s was in the country's top five provincial towns, those with populations of 5-8,000, and was comparable to Bristol and Salisbury.<sup>216</sup>

Exeter's population growth was not seriously affected by plague or epidemics. Plague, however, may have had a serious impact in 1479/80. The Town customs accounts indicate a fall in shipping between 1479 and 1481.<sup>217</sup> Slack noted two further plagues, in 1503/4 and in 1537.<sup>218</sup> He identified problems with vacant tenements and declining rent rolls in 1504 and 1538. The deaths of two mayors, in 1503/4 shows that it affected the city's elite.<sup>219</sup> The most serious epidemic in the mid-century years was in 1546/7 when Slack noted the city proclamation concerning the 'pestilence now reigning'. He analysed two extant parish registers, for St Petrock and St Mary Arches, where the burial rates were more than five times higher than the average for the 1550s. Outbreaks of influenza in 1558 and plague in 1563 did not have serious effects on Exeter.<sup>220</sup> The 1570 plague had a much more serious impact on the poorer parishes of Holy Trinity and St Mary Major, where the Crisis Mortality Ratios were massively higher (9.4 and 8.0), than the rich parish of St Petrock (1.8).<sup>221</sup> Overall the customs records give us little evidence of a serious impact on the port's trade in plague years<sup>222</sup>. More serious poverty problems were emerging

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<sup>216</sup> J. Barry, 'The South West,' in P. Clark ed., *Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume 2, 1540-1840*, Cambridge, 2008, p.70.

<sup>217</sup> R. Pickard, *The Population and Epidemics of Exeter in Pre-Census Times*, Exeter, 1947, p.85; DHC, ECA, TC 19/20, 20/21 Edward IV.

<sup>218</sup> P. Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England*, London, 1985, pp.113-114.

<sup>219</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.331a; Rowe and Cochlin, *Mayors*. John Danaster may have died in London.

<sup>220</sup> Slack, *Impact*, pp.114-115.

<sup>221</sup> Eustace Oliver, merchant and governor of the Merchants' Company in 1564 and 1576, had moved to live at Topsham in 1570 though later in the year he attempted to return to Exeter from Topsham, which was already 'infected with the plague very dangerously'. The city council refused to grant him permission to return to Exeter and had faced 'the annoiance of the citizens' *ibid.*, p.116; DHC, ECA, AB III f. 244.

<sup>222</sup> TNA, E122/43/19; E190/927/7; DHC, ECA, RR 11/12 Eliz. I. Town Customs accounts do not survive for any of the plague years between 1503 and 1570, which may indicate some impact. Exchequer customs accounts survive for 1546/7 and for 1569/70. The number of ships recorded entering the port was not high in either case but were both increases on the previous years. The same is true for ships leaving the port in 1546/7 though these but fell in 1569/70, being part of a trend from 1566. The customs records therefore give us little evidence of a serious impact on the port's trade in plague years. The city receiver's account for 1569/70 also gives no indication of any obvious effects.

by the 1560s. The city council issued 'The Order of the Poor' as early as 1560 and a system of relief was being actively administered by August, 1563.<sup>223</sup>

Exeter probably had a population which had not reached 7,000 at this time. It was a growing city which experienced plague and epidemics but the economic fortunes of the city were not seriously disrupted overall.

### *The City Elite*

The city elite were the major property owners in the late-fifteenth century and those assessed on over £40 in the Tudor surveys and subsidies. Appendix 4 lists the names, payments and known occupations of those Exeter citizens assessed most highly on their property in the Tenth of 1489. Those assessed paid one tenth of their income from lands and 8d for every 10 marks of movable goods they possessed. The main property owners were identified by totalling the number of individual entries in the Tenth of 1489 and, in some cases also, the number of tenements paid upon.<sup>224</sup> The number of properties owned gives an indication of relative wealth. The Appendix shows that the highest payers were not all merchants. Many were from gentry backgrounds and a number were lawyers. A few were prosperous artisans depending solely on their craft such as tailors and a bellfounder. The highest assessed inhabitants were the widow Johane Richemond and gentleman Henry Hull.<sup>225</sup> Six of the inhabitants owned 12 or more properties. All of these were from local gentry backgrounds, except the merchant John Hooker. The 1489 Tenth gives us a limited view of Exeter's elite and is not directly comparable with the later subsidies but it at least provides us with a glimpse of the later fifteenth century city.

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<sup>223</sup> Brodie, "'The Names of All the Poor People'", p.110; Evans, 'Echo', especially pp.410-412; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.100-117.

<sup>224</sup> Headed by Johane Richemond. Her son, John John, held another three. Johane Richemond owned 17, John Wadham 16, Henry Hull 14, Thomas Calwodley 13, John Hooker 12 and Leonard Gifford 12.

<sup>225</sup> Exeter Cathedral Archives, Vicars Choral 3114, 3116, 3117; DHC, Burnett Morris Index; Book 51 f.318a TNA C1/53/200; Inquisitions Post Mortem Henry VII, 2, pp.180-181. Johane Richemond, was the daughter of John Gernyn of Exeter. She appears to have been married three times to: Thomas Herle, the son of Sir John Herle; David John; and an unknown Richmond. She held property in St Mary Arches, All Hallows Goldsmith Street, Holy Trinity, St Sidwell and St Leonard. She died in 1499. The next wealthiest inhabitant was Henry Hull, from an established mercantile and later gentry family already established at Larkbeare in St Leonard, just outside the city.

By 1522 there was a small elite of about 6% of the total individuals who were assessed at £40 or over. (Table 2.5) £40 was considered in the following year by contemporaries as a mark of wealth as those payers were required to contribute to the 'Anticipation'. By 1522 the majority of the higher valuations were for merchants or high-ranking church officials. The amount of wealth held at the top of Exeter society was less than that held in Coventry where one merchant paid over one-ninth of the 1524 subsidy and two men were assessed on over £1,000, or in Norwich where there were even richer merchants. Exeter did not have a similar super-rich group of citizens.<sup>226</sup> In Exeter only four of the wealthiest laity were not merchants or mercers. The largest number of those assessed at between £40 and £99 were merchants but this group also included a range of craftsmen as well as clergymen and some widows.<sup>227</sup>

The 'Anticipation' of 1523 provides a detailed look at the top stratum of the community (see Appendix 5). There were 61 recorded payments for Exeter, far more than for any other Devon town.<sup>228</sup> Their occupations have been identified from other sources and Table 2.8 below shows that Anticipation payers were dominated by merchants. It also confirms the presence in the city of a significant group of wealthy gentry. Within the wide range of wealthy artisans the tailors were the largest group.

Four-fifths of the persons assessed at £200 or more in the Anticipation were merchants and mercers or, in one case, the widow of one. It is significant that nearly two-thirds of those assessed as being on the £40 threshold level for the Anticipation (20 persons) were artisans and only two were merchants, indicating the lower status of the artisans who just reached the Anticipation threshold. In 1524 the peak of the social pyramid differed only marginally as of the 29 richest citizens 14 were merchants (Appendix 3).<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, p.62; W.G. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder: The England of Henry VIII 1500-1547*, London, 1976, p.96.

<sup>227</sup> They were a goldsmith, surgeon, bellfounder, saddler, cordwainer, tanner and three men for whom occupations have not been firmly identified. There were also six clergymen and two widows (of merchants) in this category.

<sup>228</sup> Totnes had 31 payers and Plymouth 15. Outside the Exeter city walls 6 persons paid the Anticipation in St Thomas and 2 in both St Edmund and St Leonard.

<sup>229</sup> 32 (3.1%) were assessed in 1524 at £40 to £99 as opposed to 3.2% in 1522, and 29 persons were rated at above £100, 4 more than two years earlier.

**TABLE 2.8 OCCUPATIONS IN ANTICIPATION OF 1523**

OCCUPATION IDENTIFIED IN OTHER SOURCES	NUMBER OF ANTICIPATION TAXPAYERS
<b>MERCANTILE:</b>	
MERCHANT	15
MERCER/MERCHANT	2
GENT-MERCHANT	2
CAPPER- MERCHANT	1
TAILOR-MERCHANT	1
MERCER	1
<b>ARTISAN:</b>	
TAILOR	5
BAKER	2
BOWYER	2
CORDWAINER	2
APOTHECARY	1
BELLFOUNDER	1
SADDLER	1
GOLDSMITH	1
FISHER/FISHMONGER	1
SURGEON	1
SHEARMAN	1
DYER	1
TANNER	1
<b>GENTRY:</b>	
GENTLEMAN	5
ESQUIRE	2
LAWYER	2
OFFICE HOLDER	3
YEOMAN	1
WIDOW	1
UNKNOWN	3

(Source: TNA E179/97/186)

In the 1544 subsidy an elite of 5.4%, assessed at over £100, shows a similar picture to previous years (Table 2.6).<sup>230</sup> There were 33 persons assessed on lands in 1544, over three times as many as 20 years earlier. Youings proposed that in the 1540s a temporary challenge to the merchant-domination of the city emerged from a group of new resident city gentry.<sup>231</sup> Some of the valuations on lands were, however, those of merchants who had previously been assessed on goods and now held rural properties.<sup>232</sup> The wealthiest occupations were merchants and mercers. The others were tailors or draper-tailors and

<sup>230</sup> 4% were assessed at over £40 and under £99 and only 14 taxpayers (1.4%) were rated at over £100

<sup>231</sup> Youings, *Early Tudor Exeter*, pp.25-27.

<sup>232</sup> A good proportion of those paying on lands (58%) were paying on £5 or less in value and were therefore of less significance.

gentlemen and a few men from the food and drink trades.<sup>233</sup> The merchants mostly dominated the city's wealth by the 1540s.

In 1557 (Table 2.7) the majority of the highest payers were merchants and two were mercers. One was a tailor but there were few gentry included. The 1557 subsidy unusually contains very little reference to resident gentry in the city compared to the subsidies of the 1520s and 1540s.<sup>234</sup>

### *The Lesser Exeter Citizenry*

The lesser citizenry here include all the other assessed taxpayers who were not part of the £40 or more assessed elite. They have been divided into categories, and examined below, based on those suggested by Julian Cornwall, from the £20-£39 assessed master craftsmen and lesser merchants to those who were included as 'nil' taxpayers.<sup>235</sup> There is also some discussion of designations included in the tax returns such as 'servants'.

The Tenth of 1489 allows us a limited view of the lesser citizenry as it only includes landholders and assessments on goods over 10 marks. Further it is not organised by parish. We can, however, use the known occupations of some citizens to give us further insights. The late-fifteenth century Exeter tailors are the best documented artisans, known from a list of guild members of 1482.<sup>236</sup> Appendix 6 identifies 13 tailors listed in the Tenth but only one could be considered wealthy.<sup>237</sup> Some of the leading artisans, however, moved from their craft into trading.<sup>238</sup>

In the Military Survey of 1522 the prosperous master craftsmen were best represented in the £20 to £39 category. Cornwall's fiscal classification sees this group as the lesser merchants and manufacturers in the towns and this was the

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<sup>233</sup> Only the butchers, bakers and brewers also had more than one man assessed on over £40.

<sup>234</sup> *Tudor Exeter* pp.55, 64, 70; TNA C3/59/40. Only John Parker esquire, assessed on 20 marks of lands in St Mary Arches and Robert Frye, a gentleman assessed at £10 in Holy Trinity, are listed.

<sup>235</sup> Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, pp.25-29.

<sup>236</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1a f.96.

<sup>237</sup> Robert Chubbe was assessed as possessing nearly twice the wealth of the next highest assessed tailor.

<sup>238</sup> See 3.3 and 4.3.

case in Exeter.<sup>239</sup> They were only 5% of the total listed. (Appendix 2) and included men working in 12 artisan occupations. This category was one of almost identical numbers by 1524/25 and a little higher in 1544, as shown in Appendix 3.<sup>240</sup> By the 1540s it is in the upper limits of the master craftsmen group that the decline of fortunes compared to the 1520s is most apparent. This may reflect more economic difficulties in the city, though it is also probably a product of less reliable subsidy assessments.

Those assessed in 1522 at between £5 and £19, comprising nearly a fifth of the total in Exeter, were master artisans. Cornwall identifies the group as the skilled craftsmen in the towns.<sup>241</sup> They were from a wide range of crafts. In 1524/25 the numbers in this category were a little fewer and in 1544 a little higher.<sup>242</sup> In 1557, although the assessment valuations are less reliable, they suggest that there was a large group, of nearly half of those assessed, who were independent artisans conducting a wide range of businesses within the city and assessed at between £5 and £19.

In 1522 nearly another third of those listed were assessed at between £1 and £4, many being artisans. This conclusion differs from Cornwall's, who sees them, especially the £1-£2 group, more as servants. However in 1524/25 nearly 69% of the taxpayers were assessed at under £4 and of these nearly 38% of the total paid on under 40s, and mostly on a 20s rating. This corresponds closely with the 70% who were assessed in the 1522 survey at 'nil' or under £4. We can infer that perhaps two thirds of the taxed population of early Tudor Exeter were within this group. By 1544 over 63%, were rated at £4 and under and of these nearly 36% paid on 40s or less on goods. The poorer taxpayers was thus some 6% lower than twenty years earlier but the 1544 figure is artificial because it excludes all wage earners. Therefore, proportionately, the poorer class was possibly greater by the later date. For these men their crafts are less easy to identify.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, pp.27-28.

<sup>240</sup> 5% in 1522 and 1524/25. The figure was 7% in 1544.

<sup>241</sup> Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, pp.25-29 discusses fiscal categories.

<sup>242</sup> In 1522 there were 20% in this category, in 1524/25 16%, in 1544 22%.

<sup>243</sup> They include tailors, butchers, pewterers, and also a hatmaker, stainer, waxchandler, weaver and shoemaker.



There were 41 men designated as 'servants' in the 1522 survey assessed at above the 'nil' level. Two-thirds of them were rated at £2 or less. The majority were resident in the Cathedral Close, though some were servants to artisans.

<sup>244</sup> At the £2 assessment men from gentry or aristocratic households were included and at over £2 they were nearly all in clerical or aristocratic houses. Some of these men were not household servants. John Keyth was a tailor who worked in the Courtenay's household and Walter Wescott was a smith.<sup>245</sup>

These lower assessments were not, therefore, those of the poor in Exeter. Four were servants to tailors in 1522, more than any other occupation. This may be an indication of their prosperity in taking on more 'servants' many of whom were probably wage-workers and were not the poor at all. Twenty-five men were termed apprentices in 1522. The wealthy merchant Gilbert Kirk had three apprentices and a servant in his household in St Mary Arches in 1522.<sup>246</sup>

Among the artisans the pewterer Peter Spryng had two apprentices and a servant.<sup>247</sup> Ten of the apprentices were listed as being resident in St Petrock and seven in St Mary Arches thus confirming the existence of wealthy residences at these parishes. In 1557 two men were termed 'Baccheler' in the subsidy.<sup>248</sup>

In the 1522 survey the 40% of entries recorded as 'nil' assessments provide a view of those near the bottom of the social structure. The largest group, of 46 men, were servants to the ecclesiastical households in the Cathedral Close. The other 'nil' assessments have been analysed by parish. Every Exeter parish had at least one within it. The largest numbers were in St Mary Major (21) and St Petrock (18). This reflects the large size of the former parish and the wealth of the latter. For those who are recorded in both listings we can compare their

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<sup>244</sup> To cordwainers, curriers, a bookbinder and a fuller.

<sup>245</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.15; DHC, ECA, AB I ff.167b.

<sup>246</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.20.

<sup>247</sup> Spryng was resident in St Stephen and not in the area where many pewterers worked near the South Gate. He paid a shop fine as a pewterer for a number of years but is not recorded as entering the freedom. DHC, ECA, AB I ff.159a, 167a, 169b, 171b, 175a; *Tudor Exeter* pp. 7, 36; Stoye, *Water*, p.82.

<sup>248</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, pp.82,83; *Tudor Exeter*, pp. 59,62,68; TNA C3/5/90. One was assessed on £5 in St Sidwell and one on £3 in St Petrock. One was later a butcher and the other a merchant. The term is used in the tailors' guild where a bachelor's fellowship existed. Bachelors were junior members of guilds. See 4.1.

'nil' assessments in 1522 with their standing in 1524 or 1525. Then the largest group were assessed on 20s wages (40%) and another significant number were assessed on wages of between 26s 8d and 53s 4d. (22%). This confirms the notion that the 'nil' assessments in 1522 were not the poor but were wageworkers or small scale artisans as some were assessed on goods valued at £2 or below (16%) In the lay subsidies of 1524/25 there were 14 persons rated at 'nil'. The majority of these were assessed on wages and the largest number was in Holy Trinity. The 1544 and 1557 lay subsidies do not contain 'nil' or wage assessments so comparisons are not possible. Those at the bottom of the listed citizens in Exeter's Tudor taxation records were not destitute figures.

### *Aliens in Exeter*

Aliens were a significant group in Exeter's society in the late fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries. Appendix 7 indicates the number of resident aliens showing that in the 1520s and 1540s there was a recorded group of between 43 and 69. In Exeter the alien population has been suggested was 4% in 1377 and 1524/25, though in the Military Survey in 1522 they formed 7% of taxpayers.<sup>249</sup> This was far lower than that in Bristol and Southampton, where the aliens may have been 10% and 12% of the population.<sup>250</sup> The number in Exeter remained fairly stable up to the 1540s. By 1557 Exeter's alien population had perhaps declined at a time of war with France, though this was not substantial. Osborne has made a study of 57 men in the city whom she has identified as aliens living there between 1557 and 1602, so there continued to be a notable alien presence then.<sup>251</sup> The overall number had fallen from the 109 studied by Kowaleski in the 1440s.<sup>252</sup> For Exeter we have very little information on alien families, which affects our ability to estimate their total numbers.

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<sup>249</sup> M. Ormrod, B. Lambert and J. Mackman, *Immigrant England 1300-1550*, Manchester, 2019, p.61; *Tudor Exeter* pp.7-33.

<sup>250</sup> Ormrod et.al., *Immigrant England*, p.61.

<sup>251</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp.147-153.

<sup>252</sup> M. Kowaleski, 'The Assimilation of Foreigners in Late Medieval Exeter: A Prosopographical Analysis' in W. Ormrod, N. McDonald and C. Taylor, ed., *Resident Aliens in Later Medieval England*, Turnhout, 2017, pp.163-180.

The EIDB project at York has led to much research into the aliens resident in England between 1300 and 1550.<sup>253</sup> Kowaleski has published a study of aliens in earlier-fifteenth century Exeter and the present writer has explored this for the years from 1470 to 1525.<sup>254</sup> For Exeter there have also been earlier themed studies by Allan on Breton woodworkers and by Orme on the Norman publisher Martin Coffyn<sup>255</sup>

The sources drawn on here are the alien subsidy of 1484, the Tenth of 1489, the Military Survey and the lay subsidies.<sup>256</sup> Use has been made of the EIDB database, though it does not contain material from the 1522 Military Survey, which records the nationality of all the aliens listed and their parish of residence in Exeter, nor from the 1557 lay subsidy. These have been linked with a range of national and local records. The fiscal sources are concerned with taxing first-generation migrants but by the second-generation aliens were well assimilated in society.<sup>257</sup>

The 1484 alien subsidy records only Flemings but a range of nationalities were recorded in the Military Survey of 1522 and the lay subsidies of the 1520s. The Flemings in Exeter in the 1484 alien subsidy are distinguished as 19 householders and 7 non-householders.<sup>258</sup> By the 1520s men from the Low Countries and Brittany were the largest groups, in roughly equal numbers (see Appendix 7). This may have prevented the creation of a more cohesive alien

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<sup>253</sup> [www.englishimmigrants.com](http://www.englishimmigrants.com). EIDB refers to the England's Immigrants Data Base. Resulting from the project a recent overview of immigrants in England has been published by Ormrod et.al., *Immigrant England*. A further publication has included articles on aliens in some leading towns (London, Southampton and Great Yarmouth) and on some specific nationalities (French and Icelanders): F. Guido-Bruscoli and J. Lutkin, 'Perception, Identity and Culture: The Italian Community in Fifteenth Century London and Southampton Revisited'; C.D. Liddy and B. Lambert, 'The Civic Franchise and the Regulation of Aliens in Great Yarmouth c.1430-1490'; P. Fleming, 'Icelanders in England in the Fifteenth Century'; C. Linsley, 'The French in Fifteenth Century England: Emnity, Ubiquity and Perception' in Ormrod et. al., *Resident Aliens*, pp.77-104, 125-146.

<sup>254</sup> Kowaleski, 'Assimilation'; P. Williams, 'The Alien Community in Exeter 1470-1525: Interactions and Contributions', forthcoming in *The Fifteenth Century*, 2021.

<sup>255</sup> Allan, 'Breton Woodworkers', pp.320-356. N.Orme, 'Martin Coeffyn, the First Exeter Publisher', *The Library*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, 10, 1988, pp.220-230 is a very full account of his life and activities.

<sup>256</sup> [www.englishimmigrants.com](http://www.englishimmigrants.com); *Tudor Exeter*, pp.1-59.

<sup>257</sup> Ormrod et. al., *Immigrant England*, pp.9-10.

<sup>258</sup> [www.englishimmigrants.com](http://www.englishimmigrants.com). This is unusual as in most alien communities in England there were more non-householders.

community as there was not one dominant group. The next largest groups were Normans and French.<sup>259</sup> A few were from the lands of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>260</sup> Italians are only rarely recorded in Exeter.<sup>261</sup> By this time there is little reference to Channel Islanders, who had secured tax exemption.<sup>262</sup> Peter Blackmore is listed as a 'moren' and, as his name suggests, he was probably a Moor.<sup>263</sup> The nationality of aliens is not given in the 1544 and 1557 lay subsidies.

Aliens in Exeter followed a range of occupations. In the 1480s they were leatherworkers, goldsmiths and in the clothing trades. They were able to enter the city freedom as shown in Appendix 7. Shoemakers and cordwainers were the most represented. Successful aliens, who already had established businesses in the city, were called upon to pay larger freedom entry fines by the early sixteenth century, often of £2 or £1 13s 4d.<sup>264</sup> They were fiscal targets for the city council, though native merchants were also known to be charged up to £5.

In the reign of Henry VIII aliens in Exeter were paying fines for running their shops and workshops, particularly in the clothing, leather and metal trades (Appendix 7). They were well represented as shoemakers and were also a large proportion of the identified pouchmakers. They played a major role in Exeter's hatmaking trade though the craft was not dominated by men from the Low Countries as in other towns.<sup>265</sup> The Exeter hatmakers were Norman, Dutch,

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<sup>259</sup> Ormrod et. al., *Immigrant England*, pp. 92-102 for a discussion of French aliens.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p108 discusses some of these groups from within the Empire.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p.116-117 discusses the few Italians resident in England outside London and Southampton. Lucchese were exempt from the higher levels of payment.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., p.190 for a discussion of Moors and Blackamoors; *Tudor Exeter* p.18.

<sup>264</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I ff 159a-194b; Book 156b ff.1-11. Such as those levied on five cordwainers/shoemakers, three hatmakers and a stainer, goldsmith, bookbinder and a capper between 1514 and 1532.

<sup>265</sup> John Poke, a Norman hatmaker, entered the city freedom in 1526/27, paying a fine of £2. He was assessed on £20 worth of goods in 1522 and was therefore a man of some substance. He had a business in the parish of Holy Trinity, employed two servants, and leased property in Southgate. Poke paid shop fines for ten years between 1517 and 1527. A John Hatmaker from Brabant was resident in St Martin in 1522 and that he was a hatmaker is confirmed by a payment he received in 1514 from the city for eighteen hats to equip the militia. Ormrod et. al. *Immigrant England*, pp.129-130; *Exeter Freeman*, p.70; DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff. 155a, 167b, 164b,178b,181b, 183a, 184b, 186b, 188b, 190b, 192b, 193b; *Tudor Exeter*, pp. 23, 44, 45.

from Brabant and Italian.<sup>266</sup> Only one resident alien trader has been identified working at this time. Nicholas Danyell, a merchant from Venice, became a denizen in 1533 and an Exeter freeman in 1535 but does not appear in any of the contemporary taxation assessments.<sup>267</sup> A few other resident aliens appear in the customs accounts as traders, even if this was not their major stated occupation.<sup>268</sup>

In the taxation records of the 1520s they were spread across ten of the city parishes and were evenly distributed amongst the prestigious and poorer parishes. The question of the existence of a foreign enclave in Exeter is debatable.<sup>269</sup> In 1544 alien men were living across the city in 14 parishes. Their widespread residence is a strong indication of their integration into the city.

The Exeter aliens resident were not members of the wealthy elite as Appendix 7 illustrates. None were among the top-ranking contributors to the 1489 Tenth. Only six aliens listed in 1522 paid on £10 or more. Those paying on £1 or £2 were mostly craftsmen. The largest number were 'nil' assessments and many of these were 'servants', probably wage workers. In 1524/25 many were middling craftsmen. In 1544 the aliens were an artisan group of no great wealth. The highest assessment was on £20. The largest groups were assessed on £2, £1, or below this, paying the basic alien rate. It is less meaningful to analyse wealth in the lay subsidies by 1557 as valuations became less reliable.

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<sup>266</sup> DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff. 169b, 167a, 164b, 178b, 181b, 183a, 184b, 186b, 188b, 190b, 192a, 193b; DHC, ECA, Book 156b f7; *Exeter Freeman*, p.71; *Tudor Exeter*, pp. 36, 51.

<sup>267</sup> *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, London, HMSO, 1862-1932, Vol. 6, no.578, 21; DHC, ECA, ABI f.142a; *Exeter Freeman*, p.72. He became a denizen in 1533 and entered the freedom two year later.

<sup>268</sup> TNA, E122/43/14; DHC, ECA, TC 34/35 Henry VIII. The waxchandler John Gomby imported crest cloth, canvas fruit, iron, honey and oil. The carver Godfrey Harman and the cobbler Lewis Sage, were both aliens who also become involved in overseas trading.

<sup>269</sup> There are references to variants of 'Brittany' in the records which could suggest one in All Hallows on The Walls. Earlier we find Britaigne, Britaygne and le britan: DHC, ECA, Exe Bridge Wardens' Accounts 10/11 Ed IV, 22/23 Ed IV, 6/7 Henry VII, 16/17 Henry VII, 2/3 Henry VIII, 12/13 Henry VIII, 22/23 Henry VIII, 32/33 Henry VIII, 4/5 Edward VI, 3-4 and 4/5 Philip and Mary, 2/3 Eliz. I.

Few Exeter citizens obtained letters of denization, perhaps due to the high costs involved.<sup>270</sup> A wave occurred in Exeter as a result of government policy in the 1540s.<sup>271</sup> A few instances also occurred in the 1560s but overall the impact on Exeter was not substantial.<sup>272</sup>

Aliens were able to take up civic office. There were no regulations against this as there were in London, Norwich and Ipswich.<sup>273</sup> Exeter's most distinguished alien civic officer was the Iclander Wymond Austyn.<sup>274</sup> He was warden of Exebridge in 1488/89 and 1489/90, a bailiff in 1491/2, receiver in 1505/6 and a member of the city council. Other aliens did take on offices in Exeter as churchwardens.<sup>275</sup> A few aliens took on guild office.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> For the high costs involved and later denizations in the 1540s see Ormrod et. al., *Immigrant England*, pp.28-29, 195-198. John Poke was described as a denizen in 1525: *Tudor Exeter*, p.44.

<sup>271</sup> The records of the tailors' guild show denizens being noted when they are admitted in 1541 and 1542. Other letters were granted to Normans and Bretons in 1544. DHC, ECA, TAB I ff.5b,8a; [www.englishimmigrants.com](http://www.englishimmigrants.com).

<sup>272</sup> Ormrod et. al., *Immigrant England 1300-1550*, p.33.

<sup>273</sup> W. Page ed., *Letters of Denization and Acts of Naturalisation for Aliens in England 1509-1603*, Publications of the Huguenot Society of London, 8, 1893, pp.32,233.

<sup>274</sup> Ormrod et. al., *Immigrant England 1300-1550*, p.33.

<sup>275</sup> *Tudor Exeter* pp. 2,20,21,40; *Calendar of Patent Rolls Henry III to Philip and Mary, 1216-1558*, London, 1891-1939, 1476-1485, p.242; *Exeter Freeman*, pp.64,66,69; TNA E122/43/14; C1/145/64; 145/64,221/16,262/91; DHC, ECA, AB I ff. 7a,24a,97a-b; Fleming, 'Icelanders', p.86. He was Icelandic, having been born at Rene, but was resident in Exeter in 1481 when he received a royal pardon He was a waxchandler and involved in overseas trading. He was perhaps a migrant from Bristol, which had a number of resident Icelanders. We are not sure when he entered the city council as continuous attendance records only commence in 1508 but he was censured for non-attendance in October,1509, when he appears to have been out of the city. He was removed from the city council in 1523. He may have been excused due to illness as he still receive his tri-annual allowances of canon bread and wine.

<sup>276</sup> DHC, Exeter Holy Trinity PW3, PW4; Exeter St John DD36769. The Norman hatmaker John Poke in Holy Trinity three times in the 1520s and John Bawdon served there in the early 1550s. The shoemaker Warner Haydon in St John's Bow in 1526 and 1527 and the cobbler Lewis Sage in the early 1530s. Unlike the aliens in Sandwich in Kent, studied by Ford, civic office did not pre-date parish office in Exeter: J. Ford, 'Marginality and the Assimilation of Foreigners in the Lay Community: the case of Sandwich' in K.L. French, G.G. Gibbs and B.A. Kumin, ed., *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600*, Manchester, 1997, pp.203-216.

<sup>277</sup> TNA C1/631/4 DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.13a,14b,18b,19a,22a; *Exeter Freeman*, pp.75,80,87,89,94,95; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.53,58,62; TNA, Prob 11/72/29. The Dutchman Matthew Fleet, became a warden of the cordwainers' guild in the 1520s. Aliens rarely took on any leadership of the cordwainers, at least from the known officials. Sandy Napper was the only known alien to become a Tailors' guild official at this time He was listed as an alien in the lay subsidies for 1544, 1557 and 1577, living in All Hallows Goldsmith Street, and had a servant in 1557. He had entered the freedom in 1541 and built up a successful business as six of his apprentices entered the city freedom. His will, dated 1582, survives and by then he was identified as a draper, who had moved from Exeter to London.

Aliens did not work so frequently as tailors in Exeter. The strongest guild in the city fought successfully to keep them out of the trade. Eight tailors' membership lists dating from 1477 to 1481 contain no evidence of any alien membership. One for 1520 includes two alien hosiers and three from 1559 to 1564 include only one.<sup>277</sup> The tailors' records do contain some evidence of antagonism in 1516 and 1521 towards alien tailors working in the city.<sup>278</sup> Another instance was the controversy that surrounded Gilbert Kirk who brought a case to Chancery in 1537 after it was declared that he was a Scot and he claimed that he had lost £200 as a result of the accusation.<sup>279</sup> Overall there are few instances of anti-alien feeling recorded in Exeter.

There was not a large alien population living in the city and not one dominant alien group. The aliens were primarily craftsmen in the leather, clothing and the metal and wood trades. There is little evidence of resident foreign merchants. Those who settled in Exeter were mainly artisans rather than traders. The aliens were not affluent but were mostly of middling and lower status. Many were servants and may have been young migrants. A few took up positions in city and guild governance and more probably played a leading role in their parishes. Aliens made a particularly important contribution to the development of the crafts in the city. Hatmaking was led by foreign migrants. They were important within the city's leather trades. Exeter's alien workers also contributed significantly to the emergence of skilled woodworking as carvers and joiners. They also made a cultural impact as publishers, bookbinders and painters. There is not much evidence of discrimination against aliens though there was some by both guilds and the city council. Overall, Exeter was a prosperous city which offered opportunities. The aliens were well assimilated into a growing city which had no real need to exclude them.

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<sup>277</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.4, 9, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 105, 138; TAB I ff.27b, 33B; AB IV ff.178-179. In the 1520 list Iwen Codlyn was a Breton living in St Petrock, who paid shop fines in 1517 and in the 1520s. Robard Le Jaunder was French, paid a shop fine in 1517 and lived in St Mary Major in the early 1520s.

<sup>278</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.55, 83a.

<sup>279</sup> TNA C1/731/29; DHC, ECA Book 51 f.345.

## *Women Householders in Exeter*

Very few women are recorded in the tax returns. Those listed are often wealthy property-owning widows. However, the records also clearly show some evidence of independent female householders and some women wage-earners.

Twenty women contributed to the 1489 Tenth. Nearly half were assessed as property owners. By far the most substantial was Johane Richemond, who was assessed at nearly four times the next highest woman, a situation unrivalled for the rest of the period studied. The majority of the property owners were identified as the widows of prominent Exeter men including those of the mayors in 1475 and 1482.<sup>280</sup> The women who were tenants, paying on behalf of a property owner, were in all but two cases, paying small amounts and were not all widows.<sup>281</sup> Table 2.9 below presents an analysis of women householders in the comparable Exeter subsidies from 1522 to 1557.

**TABLE 2.9 WOMEN TAXPAYERS IN EXETER 1522-1557**

YEAR	1522	1524/25	1544	1557
ASSESSED AMOUNT	NUMBER	NUMBER	NUMBER	NUMBER
£200	1	1	0	0
£100	0	0	0	0
£50-£99	2	0	0	0
£40	0	2	0	0
£20-£39	1	2	4	3
£10-£19	5	4	8	5
£5-£9	3	2	15	11
£3-4	2	3	5	0
£2-£2+	4	12	5	0
£1	5	5	26	1
< £1	2	0	0	0
NIL	1	0	0	1
NOT RECORDED	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	27	33	63	21

(Source: *Tudor Exeter*, pp.7-59)

<sup>280</sup> Johane was the wife of John Orenge, mayor in 1475 and Elizabeth the wife of Roger Worth, mayor in 1482.

<sup>281</sup> The lowest assessments being for Margaret Tapster and Agnes Acland. These two women were not poor and may have operated small-scale businesses, as Margaret Tapster's surname suggests. They paid 8d and 7d on behalf of the gentleman Henry Hull and the mercer and merchant Walter Yorke: *Tudor Exeter*, p.3.



The women being taxed in 1522 were mostly heads of household.<sup>282</sup> The moderately prosperous widows of city craftsmen also appear. Many of them had lower assessments and so the survey captures women across the social structure. In the 1524/25 lay subsidy the picture of the Exeter women is similar at the top of society.<sup>283</sup> However, the majority of the women listed were poorer in 1524 and were rated at 40s and under. Two were assessed as 20s wage workers, though their occupations have not been identified.

The 1544 lay subsidy listed more women than the previous tax assessments. Three-fifths of them were designated as widows. The highest assessment was on £25 of goods.<sup>284</sup> Many assessed at between £5 and £19 were the widows of small-scale traders and artisans. Those assessed on £1 were just on the tax threshold, and 65% of these were not widows. It seems likely that some could have been working independently or as wage workers, though wage-earners were not assessed as such in the subsidy. Only five women were assessed on lands, at varying amounts from £5 to £20. A more economically depressed group of women are portrayed in 1544 than any other listing, which may reflect the mid-century economic uncertainties. By 1557 fewer women were taxed.<sup>285</sup> Just under two-thirds of the women were identified as widows. It may just give us the wealthiest women at that time as only one was assessed at under £5.<sup>286</sup>

Most of the insights provided by the taxation returns were into the lives of the propertied widows. However, the records clearly show that there were some independent female householders and some women wage-earners. The

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<sup>282</sup> Such as Anna Crugge and Anys Froste who were both the widows of former mayors and both had high assessments, paying on £266 13s 4d and £60. *Tudor Exeter*, p.12.

<sup>283</sup> In 1524/5 they were headed by Anna Crugge in St Kerrian who was assessed on 400 marks. Two women were assessed on £40 and six on £20 and £10. Most are recognisable as the widows of city merchants and prosperous artisans. Two women were assessed on £40 and six on £20 and £10.

<sup>284</sup> For Agnes Hengiscott, probably the widow of the merchant Tristram Hengiscott, though he had a wife referred to as Ann and Anna in other documents. Agnes was living in St George's parish where Tristram had been resident in 1522 and 1544; *Tudor Exeter* pp 25, 41, 48, 79 ; TNA C1432/66; J.L.Vivian, ed., *The Visitations of the County of Devon. The Herald's Visitations of 1531, 1564 and 1620: pedigrees produced from original drafts in the Harleian Collection, the College of Arms, and other sources*, 2 vols, Exeter, 1895, p.607.

<sup>285</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.59.

<sup>286</sup> This was Margery Carewe a widow paying £1 on lands in St Mary Major. She had paid on £2 of goods in the same parish in 1544, when she also listed as a widow, and so her widowhood may have been one of over thirteen years. The highest was for Margaret Drake, on £30 in St Petrock. She was Exeter's most prominent female trader. See 5.1.

situation of women, especially by 1544, was perhaps economically less secure than earlier in the century.

### *Conclusion*

Exeter may have been exceptional in its rate of economic progress, as measured by Dyer's ranking of provincial towns between 1377 and 1524-25.<sup>287</sup> However, its social structure was not untypical in the extent of its polarisation of wealth. Inequality was the rule in all of the English towns at this time. Palliser's study of York shows that over a third of the taxpayers in the northern capital in 1524 were wage-earners and that 7% of the taxable population owned 50% of the assessed wealth. The situation was much the same in Norwich where 6% of the population owned 60% of the assessed goods. In Shrewsbury similarly 5% of the tax payers paid over 50% of the 1525 subsidy assessment.<sup>288</sup> In Exeter, based on MacCaffrey's figures for the 1524/25 lay subsidies, 6.6% of the taxed population paid on 66.4% of the city's assessed valuation.<sup>289</sup> Exeter was certainly at the high end of the scale in terms of the percentage of taxpayers paying over £20 with 11.2%, and of the major provincial towns studied only Norwich (11.4%) had a higher percentage in this category, though in Exeter there were fewer very wealthy citizens than some other provincial cities.<sup>290</sup> This study has confirmed the impression of the relative size of the elite presented by MacCaffrey and Hoskins of about 6% of the taxed population. However, it has concluded that there was a substantial middling group in Exeter which was probably larger than MacCaffrey's 'middle class' of 20% or even than Hoskins' calculations of a third. There was a more substantial 'middle class' in a city which afforded opportunities. It is with the lower paying and 'nil' assessed taxpayers that the greatest divergence in interpretation occurs. These Exonians were not the abject poor at all but were small-scale businessmen, journeymen and wage-earners, apprentices and household servants. Those assessed at between £4 and 'nil' accounted for about two-thirds of the taxpayers. The Exeter 'nil' assessments were not the out-and-out poor as Hoskins stated. This group

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<sup>287</sup> Dyer, *Decline*, pp. 66-74.

<sup>288</sup> Champion, 'Shrewsbury Lay Subsidy', p.39.

<sup>289</sup> Figures calculated from MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.250.

<sup>290</sup> Champion 'Shrewsbury Lay Subsidy' p.40; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.248, J.F. Pound, 'The Social and Trade Structure of Norwich 1525-1575', *Past and Present*, 34, 1966, pp. 49-69; Pound, *Tudor and Stuart Norwich*, pp.31-38.

consisted of small-scale masters, journeymen and servants and usually younger men, who were possibly struggling but by no means economically desperate. Similar groups have been identified in other towns for which good documentation survives, such as Coventry and Shrewsbury.<sup>291</sup> Below this there was a large group of people, who were not of any interest to the tax collectors, employed in far less certain circumstances in the port, manufacture and building work. The origins and development of the dominance of Exeter's wealth by the merchants and cloth retailers, identified by Osborne in her analysis of the 1586 lay subsidy, can be seen though the large percentage of wealth at the disposal of Exeter's gentry. However, it was less evident in the 1540s than it was to become in the 1580s. The wealth gap between Exeter's mercantile and gentry elite and the artisans widened as the century progressed.

## **2.3 Exeter's Trade**

### *Introduction*

This section provides an overview of the development of Exeter's overseas and coastal trade. It emphasises the overseas trade boom of the late-fifteenth century, the prosperous but steady years of the early-sixteenth century and the difficulties of the mid-century. A vital role was played in the city's economy by the trade with Brittany and France. The map below shows Exeter's trading contacts in the 1560s. The coastal trade followed similar fluctuations, though it was becoming more significant in the 1560s.

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<sup>291</sup> Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, especially pp.204-221; Champion, 'Shrewsbury Lay Subsidy', p.40.

MAP 2.4

The Overseas Trade of Exeter 1565-1570



(Sources: TNA E190/925/6,925/14,926/1,926/9,927/7)

Exeter experienced a significant growth in its overseas trade in the late fifteenth century, beginning after the signing of the Treaty of Picquigny with France in 1475. It was not, however, continuous as the wars in Brittany in the late 1480s caused some disruption. The Convention of Boulogne in 1497 created a further boost and a new peak was reached in 1501/2.<sup>292</sup> Childs has outlined a considerable expansion of shipping in South-West England, though the movement of ships in and out of Exeter was less than that for Plymouth and Dartmouth in the 1490s.<sup>293</sup> After this there was then a settling down in the level of trade from about 1510 until the mid-century though again, it was not constant due to the wars with France in the 1510s, 1520s and 1540s as well as the mid-sixteenth century economic depression. This lasted until the late 1550s, when there was a decline in shipping movements through the port of Exeter. During the 1560s international tensions, war in France and trade embargoes with Spain caused disruption in 1563-4 and 1569-1573.<sup>294</sup> The graph below (**G2.2**) shows the port's cloth export figures adapted from Carus Wilson and Coleman's data from the Enrolled Customs accounts.<sup>295</sup> As cloth was Exeter's major export it gives us a good indication of the fluctuations in the port's trade.

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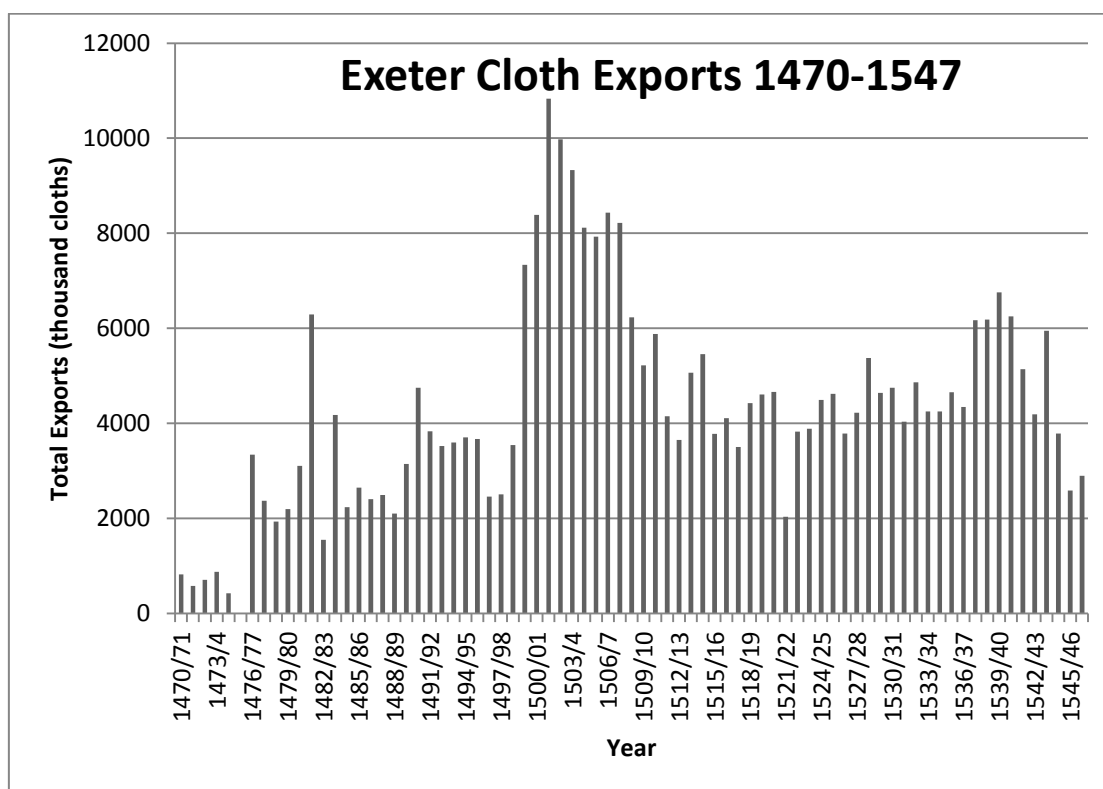
<sup>292</sup> Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade' p.88; Carus Wilson, *Expansion of Exeter*, pp.9-10.

<sup>293</sup> W.R. Childs, 'The Commercial Shipping of South-Western England in the Later Fifteenth Century', *Mariner's Mirror*, 83, 3, 1997, pp.272-292 especially pp. 276-277, 284-287 and comparisons pp. 287-289. This expansion has been noted by Oldland for London, where he sees the years from 1470 to 1520 as a discrete period of exceptionally flourishing trade. J. Oldland, 'The Expansion of London's Overseas Trade from 1475 to 1520,' in C.M. Barron and A.F. Sutton ed., *The Medieval Merchant*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, Donington, 2014, pp.55-92.

<sup>294</sup> Carus Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, pp.104-119 and p.145 (details of cloth export figures for 1470 to 1547 from the Enrolled Accounts); Youings, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade' pp.101, 103. Morlaix, the main port for Exeter's linen trade with Brittany, was occupied by the English in 1522. The effects of this, particularly on Tiverton's traders are discussed by Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.11-12. Exeter merchants had goods seized in Morlaix in August 1562 and in Spanish ports in February 1569. The names of individual Exeter merchants involved were not recorded. TNA,SP 70/40/219, 12/24/36, 12/33/16.

<sup>295</sup> Carus Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, pp.104-119, 145, 189. The figures cover the area of Exeter's customs jurisdiction.

**GRAPH 2.2 EXETER CLOTH EXPORTS 1470-1547**



(Source: Carus Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, pp.104-119, 145, 189)

Trade was mainly with Brittany, Gascony, Spain and Portugal though there were also significant contacts with Normandy, the Channel Islands and Flanders.<sup>296</sup> The most valuable imports in the early 1490s were crest cloth (linen), canvas and wine followed by woad and iron. Exports from Exeter at the end of the fifteenth century were dominated by cloth, especially straits, as well as tin and hides.<sup>297</sup> By the end of the period studied exports were predominantly of woollen cloth and tin. Imports became increasingly varied but were headed by wine, canvas and linen, iron, salt and dyes.<sup>298</sup>

<sup>296</sup> Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade', p83.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., pp.79-80,83. Crest or cres cloth was a variety of linen, the speciality of the Breton Leon region used principally for clothes such as shirts. It was marketed mainly through Morlaix: Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, p.3 based on Tanguy's study of industry in Brittany.

<sup>298</sup> Youngs, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade,' pp.101-104.

There is more certainty about trade patterns for the years after the introduction of the Port Books in 1565, when the registering of ports of embarkation and destination was required. The five extant port books from Easter 1565 to Michaelmas 1570 were studied.<sup>299</sup> The Port Book for 1565 was used to identify the commodities traded in as it provides the fullest amount of detail and was representative at a time of little real change.<sup>300</sup> The direction of the trade between 1567 and 1569 is presented in Appendix 9. Across these later years the most dominant port in the trade with Exeter was La Rochelle. Rochelle wine and Bay salt were mainly brought into Exeter and the principal goods being shipped out were cloth including Devon kerseys, Reading kerseys, Moltons, Northern cloth, cottons and broadcloth. Other commodities included tin, lead, wax and sugar. Other French ports in the same region including Bordeaux, Oleron, St John de Luce (Luz), Crosswyke (Le Croisic) and Borage (Bay of Brouage) were also involved bringing in primarily Bay salt and exporting much the same goods as to La Rochelle.

The Breton ports were headed by Morlaix and St Malo, which were of equal importance in the overseas trade. Other Breton ports involved included Nantes, Le Conquet, Poldavy, Audierne, Morbihan, Brest and Concarneau. Morlaix and St Malo in particular, brought in a range of canvas and linen type cloths such as Vitry canvas, lockram and dowlas as well as some Guernsey cloth. Other commodities coming in from the Breton ports included Bay salt, iron and white soap. The goods exported to Brittany were more varied than those to the French Atlantic ports. They were dominated by the same range of cloths but also included friezes, Devon tin, smith's coals and some re-shipment of sugar. There was some less substantial trade with Normandy, mostly with Rouen. Trade with the French ports was the lynchpin of Exeter's overseas trade.

The Spanish ports were the second major area and eight ports or regions were identified, notably Andalusia and Biscay.<sup>301</sup> The trade was dominated by the

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<sup>299</sup> TNA, E190/925/6, 925/14, 926/1, 926/9, 927/7 cover overseas trade. Two of the accounts, from 1567/68 and 1569/70, formed part of the sample of the customs accounts documentation chosen for the study overall.

<sup>300</sup> TNA, E190/925/6.

<sup>301</sup> In order of importance Andalusia, Biscay, just Spain, St Mary Port, Marbella, San Lucar de Barameda, Malaga and the Canaries. This can be compared with Vanes, *Documents*, pp.179-

export of cloth, especially kerseys. Additional cloths included Bridgwaters, Northern cottons and halfcloths. Devon tin and lead were also exported to Spain. Imports were mainly iron as well as oil, alum, soap and seck.<sup>302</sup> Raisins, figs, and oranges were not evident in 1565, though they were in the earlier years.

Some of the leading Exeter merchants were also heavily involved in the trade with Flanders. The Low Countries ports were designated as either 'Flanders' or Antwerp. White kerseys and Reading kerseys were sent out from Exeter as well as Devon and Cornish tin. In return a wide variety of goods was brought into Exeter. Many of these were manufactured goods. Some were cloth, thread, or goods manufactured from cloth, and dyestuffs, but also agricultural products and a few miscellaneous items.<sup>303</sup>

In the 1560s the next most important area was Portugal (termed Lisbon and Portugal by the customers). In 1565 this trade was of less value, though cargoes of white salt were brought in from Lisbon. In other years in the 1560s a few ships a year were involved in trade between Exeter and Lisbon.<sup>304</sup> Direct trade was also held with the Azores (or the 'insulis Surrey' or 'Surreis'). This trade was evident in 1568 and 1570.<sup>305</sup> Trade with the Azores mainly involved the importation of high value cargoes of woad.<sup>306</sup> At the very end of the period there was a noticeable increase in the trade with Guernsey. In 1565 this was mainly bringing in Bay salt.

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180 though the number of Spanish ports of origin of ships, especially entering Bristol, was much more extensive.

<sup>302</sup> Seck, later sack, was wine imported from the Cadiz or Jerez region. J. Vanes, ed., *The Ledger of John Smythe 1538-1550*, Bristol Record Society, 38, 1974, p.332.

<sup>303</sup> TNA, E190/925/6. In 1565 they included writing paper, black paper, white paper, backs for chimneys, lath nails, shoe buckles, copper kettles, sugar candy, licquorice, brushes, coarse tykes, paper, small balances, andirons (fire dogs), iron wire, white soap, soap, combs, uncovered cups, stone cups and glass. Cloth products included Ghentish cloth, straits, tapestry, coarse coverlets, coloured thread and Bruges thread. The dyestuffs were madder, pastel de insula (woad), and brazil. The agricultural products were rye, hops, un-worked flax and rape oil. The miscellaneous items were pitch, tar and sugar.

<sup>304</sup> The port of Exeter traded with Portugal throughout the late fifteenth century and an upsurge was evident in the 1490s, though less in Exeter than in Bristol or Southampton; W.R. Childs, 'Anglo-Portuguese Trade in the Fifteenth Century', *TRHS*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 2, 1992, p.209.

<sup>305</sup> TNA, E190/926/1, 927/7.

<sup>306</sup> See 5.2.



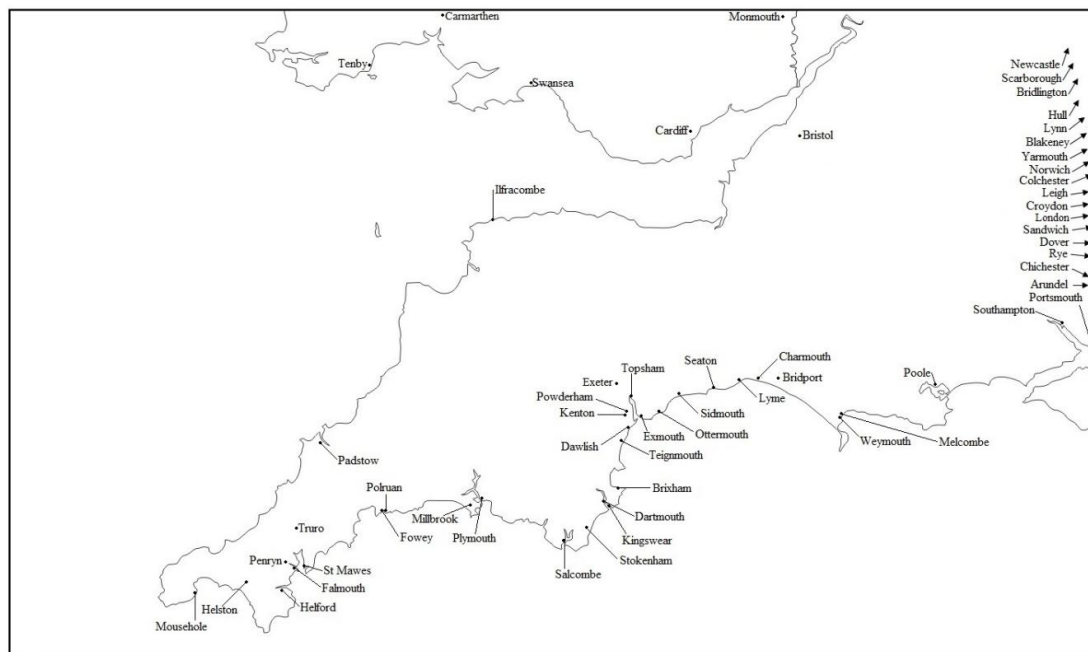
Other trading connections were being established but they were mostly of isolated shipments. Trade with Ireland was very occasional. 1570 did see the appearance of a few new ports in the trade: 'Danske' (Danzig), Hanborough (Hamburg) and 'Indea' (presumably the Portuguese 'Indies').<sup>307</sup> This may be some evidence of a more adventurous spirit than is usually ascribed to the Exeter traders.

With regard to the volume of shipping it is possible to reach some conclusions across the whole of the period from the 1470s to the 1560s. The data is presented fully in Appendix 10. The overall picture is of higher levels of shipping being reached in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century along with the 1560s. Only the 1540s and 1550s were consistently lower, thus providing evidence of more difficult decades for the port then.

### *Coastal Trade*

#### **MAP 2.5**

#### **Exeter's Coastal Trade 1470-1570 - Identified Trading Links**



**(SOURCES: TNA E122, E190; DHC, ECA, TC)**

The coastal trade was vitally important to Exeter's economy in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries accounting for 70% of shipping activity

<sup>307</sup> TNA E190/927/7; DHC, ECA, 58/7/11.

through the port.<sup>308</sup> The Town Customs accounts in the period studied indicate years of peak shipments in the coastal trade in the mid-1470s, 1480s through to the end of the second decade of the sixteenth century, and finally in the early 1560s.<sup>309</sup> With the growth of the cloth industry in Exeter's hinterland in the late fifteenth century the balance between overseas and coastal trade changed as exports of cloth through Exeter became more vitally important. By then about half of Exeter's inward movements were engaged in international trade and the value of the cargoes were also much higher.<sup>310</sup> The comparisons of the existing parallel Town Customs and national customs for the same between 1470 and 1570 show that overseas trading became more important to the port of Exeter but coastal trade accounted for over a third of shipments.<sup>311</sup> High points in the port's overseas trade may also have stimulated more coastal traffic.

The coastal trade involved moving English goods to the main port for export and the re-distributing of imported foreign goods. The trade included foreign imports such as wine and woad, locally produced goods such as tilestones, and more distant native goods such as coal. Much tin and cloth was also sent out of the port.<sup>312</sup> Youings noted that by the sixteenth century Exeter's coastal trade was the largest in volume of the Devon ports. Then Exeter received goods from across the country including foreign goods coming in from other entrepots which were sent out to other south-western ports, especially Dartmouth. Willan in his national study of coastal trade after 1565 identified a lack of cloth in the port's coastal trade in the later-sixteenth century, considering that it was Exeter's major export. He stressed the export of Cornish tin, the re-shipment of alum and the trade in Bay salt, wine and Spanish iron.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets* pp.225, 228-9 citing Touchard writing on the trade of Exeter at the beginning of the fifteenth century in 1973.

<sup>309</sup> See Appendix 10 based on .DHC, ECA, TC 10/11 Edward IV-9/10 Eliz. I. Total figures for the volume of shipping entering the port coastally and overseas have been used here but this gives a good indication of fluctuations. The peak number was 155 shipments in 1560/61 but other much earlier years approached this figure such as 1476/77 when there were 153.

<sup>310</sup> Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade', p.84 and Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.224-231.

<sup>311</sup> TNA E12241/3,41/4,201/1,41/14,41/15,41/18,41/25,43/14,43/15,45/111 ; E190/926/1; DHC/ECA,TC 10/11, 20/21,Edward IV, 4/5,8/9,9/10, 18/19 Henry VII, 34/35 Henry VIII, 4/5-5/6 Philip and Mary,9/10 Eliz. I.

<sup>312</sup> Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade' p.84 notes the surplus import of iron and linen.

<sup>313</sup> T.S. Willan, *The Inland Trade: Studies in English Internal Trade in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Manchester, 1976, p.37.

The majority of Exeter's coastal trade was carried out with Devon ports, as shown in the map above. In particular there was a special link with Dartmouth. The Cornish ports maintained a constant role in the trade, never very major but always clearly present. The Dorset ports became more important as suppliers of foodstuffs by the mid-sixteenth century, though Lyme was usually apart from the others in conducting more luxury trade. A general feature of the period was the slackening of coastal trade with Southampton which had been important in the later fifteenth century. By the mid-sixteenth century more links were being forged with London and the east coast ports.<sup>314</sup> On the whole there was much continuity in coastal trade and changes did not come about in a significant manner until the crucial mid-decades of the sixteenth century.

The coastal trade played an important role in Exeter's economy. The city performed an important regional function in collecting and re-distributing foreign imports. It also received fish and grain. It is difficult to calculate fluctuations in the volume of the coastal trade during this period, though the impression gained is that there was an expansion in the trade between the 1550s and the 1560s, even allowing for the fuller nature of the evidence by the latter decade.

## 2.4 Markets and Fairs

The city council Act Books give us some insights into the markets in Exeter at the time. Many of those for cloth were noted by MacCaffrey.<sup>315</sup> The range of them expanded in the sixteenth century, as shown in Appendix 11.

Kowaleski has outlined the history of fairs in Medieval Exeter. There were seven and all of them were still being held in the sixteenth century. Four of them were the only fairs held in Devon between early December and early April and so were of real importance in Exeter's role as a trading centre.<sup>316</sup> The founding of five new fairs between the 1370s and the 1460s has been argued by Kowaleski to be a sign of the city's economic vitality. On fair days all city shops were

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<sup>314</sup> P. Williams, 'Exeter's Coastal Trade 1470-1570', unpublished paper, 2015.

<sup>315</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.23, 68-69, 75-77, 80-83.

<sup>316</sup> Kowalewski, *Local Markets*, pp.60-68, 362-363.

closed and the freemen's privileged position with regard to sales in the city was suspended.

## CHAPTER 3: THE TRADES AND CRAFTS IN EXETER 1470-1570

### 3.1 Trades and Crafts

#### *Context and Sources*

The distributive trades dominated Exeter's economy throughout the period studied with the merchants gradually establishing stronger control. The tailors were always the second-ranked occupation. However, Exeter also depended on a wide group of successful middling craftsmen who made a vital contribution to the city's prosperity. Over time these crafts became more organised into guilds but the city's merchant elite was able to bring these guilds more firmly under its influence by the 1560s. The leading members of these crafts and trades did participate in Exeter's overseas and coastal commerce but this involvement was increasingly curtailed, though not completely removed, by the city's merchant governors in the sixteenth century.

The occupational structure of Exeter in this period has not been fully explored by the historians of the city. This chapter provides an occupational overview between 1470 and 1570 based on a multi-source approach to set the merchants and tailors in the wider context of Exeter's economy. It uses not only the freedom records but other sources such as the lists of shop fines levied in the city, the occupations of defendants given in the Court of Common Pleas and a range of other records.<sup>317</sup> The first section addresses the complaint made by Pelling that 'sources other than freemen's rolls of citizens of towns or members of companies have largely been used only in towns where these records

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<sup>317</sup> A range of other historical sources has been used to give a multi-source approach to this study of occupations. Initial study involved analysis of the Freemen's records; *Exeter Freemen*; the lists of Shop Fines (DHC,ECA,AB I ff.159a-194b;Books156b and Book 100) then research into locally held records such as Parish Registers (DHC, Exeter St Petrock PR1), Quarter Sessions papers (DHC,ECA, Quarter Sessions Rolls, Sessions Papers 4&5 P and M – 12 Eliz I), Churchwardens' Accounts (DHC Exeter St Petrock PW1-3; Exeter St John DD 36767-36772) Book of Presentments (DHC, ECA, Book 100) and Exeter Deeds ( DHC, ED/M),and the records of the Mayor's Court (DHC,ECA, MCR12/13 Henry VIII). Further use has also been made of central court records such as those of the courts of Common Pleas (TNA CP40 accessed via [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40_Indices.html) and Chancery and Common Pleas (TNA CI and C3). The documentary sections in the works by Stoye, *Circled With Stone* and *Water* were also analysed for information on occupations.

happen to be absent, or with respect to rural areas'.<sup>318</sup> It also discusses social groups at the extremes of society outside the freemen, shop fine payers and other occupational groups, often ignored in urban studies, such as the city's labourers and its gentlemen and yeoman. Consideration is also made of women's role in the trades and crafts, other than the merchants and tailors. The occupational character of some contrasting parishes is also examined. The chapter then moves on to explore the minor guilds (all those other than the Merchants' Company and the Tailors' guild) using the contributions they made to the purchase of corn supplies in December, 1562 as an indication of their standing in the city. Finally the changing role artisans played in the city's overseas trade is discussed.

Phythian-Adams' study of the economic structure of the eight leading provincial towns in the early sixteenth century includes Exeter.<sup>319</sup> His analysis was, however, based only on the Exeter freemen's records dating from 1500 to 1530. The data set for Exeter was therefore about a seventh of the size of that he used for York and Bristol, a quarter of that he used for Norwich and not much less than half for Coventry, so his findings should be treated cautiously. He concluded that Exeter had a wide manufacturing base but the highest proportion of merchants/mercers and tailors of the towns studied. Only Chester had a lower percentage of building workers and this group was six or seven times higher in Norwich and York. He also comments on the significant number of goldsmiths in Exeter. Exeter was not included in the occupational analysis of major towns in the late fifteenth century by Britnell or by Palliser in his analysis of the occupational distribution in ten English towns in Elizabethan England.<sup>320</sup> The intention here is to set out a more fully developed survey of Exeter's occupations for the first time.

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<sup>318</sup> M. Pelling, 'Occupational Diversity: Barber-surgeons and Other Trades 1550-1640' in id., *The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England*, London, 1998, p.205. This study makes some valuable comments about the occupational structure of towns.

<sup>319</sup> C. Phythian Adams, 'The Economic and Social Structure' in *The Fabric of the Traditional Community; English Urban History 1500-1780*, Milton Keynes, 1977, pp.5-40.

<sup>320</sup> R.H. Britnell, 'The Economy of the British Towns 1300-1540' in Palliser ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain 600-1540*, p.326.; D. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth: England under the Later Tudors 1547-1603*, Harlow, 1983, pp. 242-246.

Exeter's occupations have been studied for earlier and later periods. MacCaffrey's work rests upon an analysis of the freemen's records for the years from 1620 to 1640 and shows the dominance of wholesalers in Exeter as Devon's major distribution centre.<sup>321</sup> Kowaleski's study of Exeter's occupational for the late fourteenth century draws on a wide range of sources and makes the most helpful comparison with the present work. She used the 1377 murage roll and borough court litigation between 1378 and 1388 linked to a range of other historical sources. She provides a detailed survey divided into seven occupational groupings.<sup>322</sup> In contrast, Hoskins' work on Exeter considers the distribution of wealth in the city and makes little detailed reference to its occupational structure.<sup>323</sup> Occupational studies have been made of individual trades such as the pewterers and goldsmiths, city guilds (especially the Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen), and themes such as alien woodworkers.<sup>324</sup> More recently Osborne has studied the work of some occupations in Elizabethan Exeter, especially the bakers.<sup>325</sup> A few individuals have also been studied, notably the bookbinder Martin Coeffyn and the apothecary Thomas Baskerville.<sup>326</sup>

Studying the occupational structure of towns involves some decisions about the categorisation of them. Groupings used by historians have involved classifications based on the materials used or the functions of the traders

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<sup>321</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 162-164.

<sup>322</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.120-175. Kowaleski identified occupations for over 75% of the 420 householders listed in the 1377 Exeter murage roll supplemented by another 105 known Exeter householders at the time plus the occupations of 75% of litigants in the Exeter borough courts between 1378 and 1388. Her analysis also examined the city office holding, freedom membership, maritime trading, brewing and servant keeping of this group. The seven groupings are the distributive trades, the victualling trades and hostellers, the textile and clothing trades, the leather and fur trades, the metal and building trades, other trades and services and the professions, administrators and clergy,

<sup>323</sup> W.G. Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century', *TRHS*, 5th series, 6, 1956, pp.1-19; *Age of Plunder*, pp. 112-113, 117-118, 174.

<sup>324</sup> Homer, 'Exeter Pewterers', pp.57-80 ; J. Chanter 'The Exeter Goldsmiths Guild', *TDA*, 44, 1912, pp.438-479; Flavin, 'Decorative Arts' pp. 34-42; Youings, *Tucker's Hall*; Allan, 'Breton Woodworkers'.

<sup>325</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus'. Her thesis considers fully the baking trade in Exeter pp.188-203. She also investigates the business activities of other citizens for which she found the fullest biographical evidence, especially from the surviving Orphans' Court Inventories.

<sup>326</sup> Orme, 'Martin Coeffyn'; M.M. Rowe and G.E. Trease, 'Thomas Baskerville: An Elizabethan Apothecary of Exeter', *Transactions of the British Society for the History of Pharmacy*, I, 1970, pp.3-28; M.M. Rowe and G.E. Trease, 'The 1572 Bill of an Exeter Apothecary', *DCNQ*, 32, 1971, pp.17-19; DHC, ECA, Orphans Court Inventory no.62.

themselves, or a combination of both. The categorisation adopted by Pound in his study of the trade structure of Norwich has been largely followed here, although a few variations from this were considered necessary.<sup>327</sup> No systematic attempt has been made here to consider multiple occupations or by-employment, though these existed fairly widely in Exeter at the time. Kowaleski concluded that in the late fourteenth century by-employment was most prevalent amongst the distributive trades, the hostellers and the professional and administrative groups.<sup>328</sup> Osborne established the by-employment and interconnectivity of the bakers with other trades.<sup>329</sup> Brewers kept pigs and tailors were involved in farming.<sup>330</sup>

Any study of the occupational structure of English towns in the Tudor period must, however, rest firstly upon the evidence available in the records of the admissions to the city freedoms. For most of the towns for which they survive, these are incomplete. However, they do provide more information on occupations than any other single source, although they by no means provide a full economic picture. The freemen's admissions must be supplemented by information gleaned from a number of other sources.

To try to identify changes more easily within the period use has been made of the freemen's records from 1450 up to 1470 and from 1570 up to 1600, as well as those from 1470 to 1570 which remain the central focus.<sup>331</sup> The records are less complete for the mid fifteenth century years while the entries from 1570 to 1600 provide more insights as the number of entries increased as Exeter's

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<sup>327</sup> Pound, 'Social and Trade Structure'. In the present study bottlemakers have been included with the leather trades, tinkers with the distributive, potters in the metal workers, innkeepers have been classified within the transport trades, embroiders and arrasmakers and samplers have been included with the textile workers and the latter has been listed as a separate occupation, just as bowmakers have been considered to be possibly different from bowyers. Leche Spycers may have been purveyors of leeches.

<sup>328</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.124-126.

<sup>329</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp. 196-198. She explains the interconnectivity of the bakers with the cooks and also the bi-employment of bakers as millers and in husbandry.

<sup>330</sup> DHC, ECA, AB IV, f.59. The brewer Nicholas Rough was kept in the Guildhall gaol for 7 days for keeping pigs in the city contrary to an order of 1559 and also had a large outstanding fine of £5 6s 8d; DHC, ECA, Orphans' Court Inventory no.28, in Crocker ed. *Elizabethan Wills and Inventories*, pp.147-154; Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', p.198. Thomas Byrd, the tailor, owed money for the reaping and cutting of wheat and the carrying of corn and hay from lands he held.

<sup>331</sup> *Exeter Freemen*, pp. 51-109.



economy became more complex. Between 1571 and 1600 21 occupations which are not evidenced in the freeman's entries from 1470 to 1570 are recorded. They cover a wide range of types but notably the wood, transport, textiles and the food and drink trades.<sup>332</sup> Some traders are known to have existed before from other sources, such as braziers, coopers, innkeepers, millers, silk workers and vintners. Others may have taken on the freedom due to changing civic regulations such as the barrel-bearers. However, the new occupations do help us to discern changes in Exeter's economy such as the emergence of trades associated with the growing cloth industry (feltmakers, shuttlemakers, silk weavers and silkmen) and Exeter's role as a regional capital (transport trades developed such as carmen, innkeepers, ostlers and luxury trades such as virginal makers). Contrastingly, cappers did not enter the freedom after 1566 and it appears that the craft became far less significant in the city. The use of a wider range of freeman's records thus helps to put the study into a broader economic context.

In this work other sources such as shop fines, court records and parish records add to our understanding of Exeter's occupational structure. Shop fines were paid by men who had not entered the freedom for permission to retail within the city. Payments of shop fines varied across different occupations as discussed below. Many businesses were run by producer-retailers with workshops and retail combined, though the relative proportions of retail and manufacture are unknown.<sup>333</sup>

Other historical sources have been used to give a full picture of Exeter's occupational structure. In particular, a systematic study has been made of the evidence from the Court of Common Pleas. The occupations of all defendants are given in each case. Their analysis has been facilitated by the University of Houston project which makes indexes of cases available electronically for a

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<sup>332</sup> The 21 trades were barrel bearers, basketmakers, braziers, carmen, coopers, costermongers, feltmakers, gunners, innkeepers, ironmongers, labourers, lantern makers, millers, ostlers, parchment makers, shuttlemakers, silkmen, silkweavers, sleymakers vintners and virginal makers.

<sup>333</sup> N. Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: A Study of Retailing 1550-1820*, Aldershot, 2000, pp.19, 44; D.A. Davis, *A History of Shopping*, pp. 44, 60-61.

wide range of years.<sup>334</sup> Some study has also been made of the evidence in the Chancery records though occupations were not recorded systematically in that court.<sup>335</sup> The evidence contained in some Exeter records held locally such as those of the Quarter Sessions and the Mayor's Court has also been analysed. Local occupational descriptions may be more reliable than the central courts as the litigators were more likely to be present and were no doubt acutely aware of occupational status.<sup>336</sup> Parish records such as baptism records, which for some periods give the occupation of the father, and churchwardens' records have also been used.<sup>337</sup> Additional material was taken from the surviving Exeter deeds where an occupation is noted. The publication of document sections by Stoye in his works on the city walls and water supplies have also provided some valuable material, especially on the building trades.<sup>338</sup>

### *Trades and Crafts in the City of Exeter*

John Hooker, in his History of the city, remarked of Exeter's trade structure: "But now it is cheeflie inhabite with merchants, kersey clothiers and all sortes of Artificers amonge whome the merchants ar the cheefest and wealthiest".<sup>339</sup> His anatomy of the city's economy is substantiated from the surviving historical records. Throughout the sixteenth century the merchants were the dominant trading group and the tailors always followed a clear second. Hooker also spoke of the resurgence of the cloth industry, which was a marked feature of Exeter's Elizabethan economy, and mentions "all sortes of artificers", the manufacturers and craftsmen serving both the expanding town population and the closely linked rural hinterland.

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<sup>334</sup> [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40_Indices.html).

<sup>335</sup> TNA, CI and C3.

<sup>336</sup> DHC, ECA, MCR 12/23 Henry VIII; DHC, ECA, Quarter-Sessions Rolls, Session Papers, 4 and 5 P and M to 12 Eliz.I.

<sup>337</sup> DHC, Exeter St Petrock PR1; Exeter St Petrock PW1-3; Exeter St John DD 36767-36772.

<sup>338</sup> Stoye, *Circled with Stone* pp.109-202; id., *Water*, pp.395-479.

<sup>339</sup> Harte et al., *Description*, p.39.

**TABLE 3.1 THE PRINCIPAL EXETER TRADES 1450-1600- FROM THE FREEDOM ADMISSIONS**

1450-1500		1501-1550		1551-1600	
OCCUPATION	NUMBER	OCCUPATION	NUMBER	OCCUPATION	NUMBER
MERCHANTS	14	MERCHANTS	65	MERCHANTS	176
SADDLERS	11	TAILORS	41	TAILORS	98
MERCERS	10	BUTCHERS	23	WEAVERS	53
BAKERS	10	CORDWAINERS*	19	TUCKERS	53
CORDWAINERS"	9	BAKERS	18	BUTCHERS	48
BUTCHERS	9	GENTLEMEN	12	CORDWAINERS*	44
TAILORS	8	CAPPERS	11	BAKERS	33
LEATHER-DRESSERS	7	SHEARMEN	10	GOLDSMITHS	21
SHEARMEN	7	GOLDSMITHS	9	GENTLEMEN	20
SKINNERS	4	WEAVERS	8	BREWERS	20
BARBERS	4	BREWERS	8	BARBERS	19

(Source: *Exeter Freeman*)

\*A few are termed shoemakers in each period.

**TABLE 3.2 EXETER OCCUPATIONS 1450-1600-FROM THE FREEDOM ADMISSIONS**

	1450-1500		1501-1550		1551-1600	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
TEXTILES	10	7.8	28	8.7	130	13.9
CLOTHING	11	8.6	56	17.5	117	12.6
LEATHER	32	25	38	11.9	99	10.6
METAL AND WOOD	12	9.3	29	9.1	99	10.6
DISTRIBUTIVE	26	20.3	78	24.4	238	25.6
FOOD AND DRINK	25	19.5	53	16.6	115	12.4
BUILDING	3	2.3	7	2.2	42	4.5
TRANSPORT	0	0	2	0.6	11	1.2
PROFESSIONS	7	5.4	10	3.1	49	5.3
GENTLEMEN/OFFICIALS	2	1.6	19	5.9	30	3.2
TOTAL	128		320		930	

(Source: *Exeter Freeman*)

The size of the freeman group in Exeter was small. Probably at any one time there was a franchised group of, at maximum, 450 men in this period but it is more likely that the figure was nearer to 375.<sup>340</sup> This was much lower than at Norwich and York, though admittedly Norwich was a significantly larger city with a population of at least 9,000 and York also had a larger population than Exeter.

<sup>340</sup> It has been calculated that an average of fifteen men per year entered the freedom in the years from 1470 to 1570. From the extant Exeter wills consulted from that period there was an average span of thirty years from the time of a trader taking up the freedom until his death, thus suggesting this as a possible number of working years. However thirty years is a high figure as these will-makers were the more successful, long established businessmen of the city and so a lower number of years is likely. Based on figures derived from *Exeter Freeman* and the extant Exeter wills consulted, the freemen comprised probably about 5% of Exeter's population, based on a total population of probably no more than 7,500. See 2.4.

<sup>341</sup> However, in Winchester, Rosen thought that a licensing system of non-freemen, allowing them to trade, was a practical necessity as the freedom was so exclusive there, being only 70 men in the early 1560s. It could be that Exeter also needed a system of shop fines to operate as its freeman class was a relatively small one.<sup>342</sup>

Tables 3.1 and 3.2, above, based on the freedom records, show the number of men entering the freedom over three fifty-year periods and expresses this as a percentage of the total admissions in each period. The total numbers recorded were substantially less in the late-fifteenth century, which makes comparisons across the whole period tentative.

Appendix 16 provides a list of all the categories of trades and crafts identified from the range of sources. From the tables we can see the importance of Exeter as a distributive centre with merchants entering the freedom more than any other group. The clothing occupations increased significantly in their importance as Exeter became a centre for these trades, headed by the tailors serving the city and a wide area around. There was a proportionate decrease in the importance of the leather trades compared to their role in the late fifteenth century.<sup>343</sup> In the later years of the sixteenth century the distributive trades continued to expand though the most important development was the expansion of the textile occupations in the city. Over the whole period the proportion of men from the food and drinks trades entering the freedom declined.

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<sup>341</sup> P. Slack, 'Great Towns and Good Towns 1540-1700' in Clark ed. *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 2, p.352. For population estimates of Norwich and York: Pound, 'Social and Trade Structure' p.49; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp.148-69. Pound calculated that in Norwich in the 1520s there was a freeman class of approximately 705 and by the 1560s this had risen to 1,250. Palliser noted that in York in the 1530s and 1540s there may have been a freedom class of 1,250 and that of 94 men whose wills are extant from the years 1541 to 1550 there was a period of 20.5 years from enfranchisement to death. MacCaffrey suggests a population of 7,500 to 8,500 for Exeter. MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.11.

<sup>342</sup> Rosen, 'Economic and Social Aspects', pp.175-176.

<sup>343</sup> The rise in the importance of the leather trades in towns from the late fourteenth century is discussed in M. Kowaleski 'Town and Country in Late Medieval England: the Hide and Leather Trade' in P.J. Corfield and D. Keene ed., *Work in Towns 850-1850*, Leicester, 1990, pp.57-68, especially pp.64-66.

**TABLE 3.3 PRINCIPAL OCCUPATIONS PAYING SHOP FINES 1512-1542**

	<b>OCCUPATIONS</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
1	CORDWAINERS/SHOEMAKERS	41
2	TAILORS	36
3	CAPPERS	31
4	SMITHS	25
5=	SHEARMEN	16
5=	SKINNERS	16
7	BARBERS	15
8	GOLDSMITHS	11
9	GLAZIERS	10
10=	BAKERS	9
10=	HATMAKERS	9
10=	HOOPERS	9

(Sources: DHC, ECA, AB I DHC, ECA, Book 156b)

**TABLE 3.4 PRINCIPAL TRADE GROUPINGS PAYING SHOP FINES IN EXETER 1512-1542**

<b>TRADE GROUP</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>%</b>
CLOTHING	83	21.67
LEATHER	82	21.41
METAL	76	19.84
TEXTILES	33	8.62
WOOD	29	7.57
FOOD AND DRINK	28	7.31
PROFESSIONS	24	6.27
DISTRIBUTIVE	14	3.66
BUILDING	13	3.39
TRANSPORT	1	0.26

(Sources: DHC, ECA, AB I; DHC, ECA, Book 156b)

The extant documentation on the shop fines system operating between 1512 and 1542 gives us a deeper insight into the trades. In particular, it gives us more information on the middling group of craftsmen who were running businesses in the city while not entering the freedom. Further, in some cases, the shop fines provide a reference to men who cannot be traced in any other records at all and who seem to have been a more transitory lower social group appearing fleetingly and rarely in the historical record. Members of the distributive trades rarely paid shop fines as they were usually required by the city council to directly enter the freedom. Also payment of shop fines was less common for those engaged in the food and drink trades as the city used a variety of other mechanisms to control them such as the assizes of bread and ale and licensing of wine sellers. The middling group of tradesmen generally paid a shop fine of 4d or 8d with a small element paying the minimum 2d fine. There was a remarkable degree of similarity in payments across the different

occupations although aliens often paid more. There is little evidence that women paid on their own account but they did pay as widows continuing their family businesses. Traders most commonly paid primarily for a year, or for up to three years when they were setting up a business in the city before entering the freedom. Others preferred to stay as trading non-freemen for a period of time approaching a decade and in some cases paying for what could have been their whole working lives of thirty years.

The number of shop fine payers was calculated over a five year period to give us an indication of the size of this group.<sup>344</sup> Overall, a group of shop fine payers which reached at least 109 per year is evident over the period from 1512 to 1542, though this is probably a low figure if we consider that the five year totals yielded many more names. The shop fine lists for the 1560s contain fewer names than the earlier ones and the most extensive list extant then, for 1561/2, includes 58 payers, almost half of the number in the earlier decades.<sup>345</sup>

The shop fines allow us to see a group who were situated in the area which was crowded with shops and workshops in the South Quarter of the city, in the parishes of St George and St John and in the populous parishes of St Mary Major and Holy Trinity. Some also worked in the adjacent but more affluent centres of mercantile business, such as St Petrock, alongside wealthier neighbours. This middling group were most likely to be engaged in the clothing occupations or as leather workers. Shops were proliferating in Exeter in the

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<sup>344</sup> P. Williams, 'Shop Fines in Early Tudor Exeter,' unpublished paper, 2016 p.4; DHC, ECA, AB1 ff. 159a-194b; Book 156b. ff. 1-42. All persons paying shop fines over a five-year period in the years from 1512 to 1516 and 1538 to 1542 have been counted. In the earlier years 252 separate names are recorded in the lists whereas in the later years there were 213. A significant number of those paying did so for only one year. Annual totals of payers studied over a further four five-year periods suggest that the number was falling in any one year from an average of 126 in the years from 1518 to 1522, to 94 in the years from 1538 to 1542. Figures for the mid-1520s and early 1530s suggest an average of 106 to 109 payers.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., pp.50-56; DHC, ECA, Book 100 ff.57-58, 79-80, 109-110, 119-120, 135-136, 163-164, 177, 211. There were 58 payers in 1561/2, 57 in 1563/4, 43 in 1560/61, between 26 and 35 between 1564 and 1567 and a list exists for 1572 which includes only 11 persons and is not divided into city quarters, as the other ones are.

early Tudor period and this was an era before the widening economic specialisation that the city was to experience under Elizabeth I.<sup>346</sup>

**TABLE 3.5 PRINCIPAL OCCUPATIONS OF EXETER DEFENDANTS IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS 1470-1554**

1470-1519		1521-1554	
TRADE/TERM GIVEN	NUMBER	TRADE/TERM GIVEN	NUMBER
MERCHANT	100	MERCHANT	153
YEOMAN	82	GENTLEMAN	93
GENTLEMAN	66	YEOMAN	88
TAILOR	30	MERCER	35
CLERK	28	BUTCHER	33
BUTCHER	25	TAILOR	31
BISHOP	19	WIDOW	26
CHAPMAN	18	CLERK	24
DYER	17	BISHOP	20
GOLDSMITH	17	GOLDSMITH	19
MERCER	17	CHAPMAN	19
BAKER	16	BAKER	15

(Source: TNA CP 40 accessed via [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices//CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices//CP40_Indices.html))

Records from the Court of Common Pleas proved a useful source for the study of urban occupations. They have not been used much for this purpose before. Studies by Ashford using Common Pleas to study debt cases and the woollen industry in Somerset, by Amor on the cloth industry in the late fifteenth century and by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure provided some valuable guidance and comparison.<sup>347</sup> The occupations of a small number of plaintiffs are given and they have been included here. However, Table 3.5 above identifies the occupations with the largest number of Exeter defendants involved in the cases. It reinforces the importance of the merchants. It also shows the importance of gentlemen and yeoman, often neglected within urban history studies and discussed further below. The leading craft occupations are also clearly reinforced as being the tailors, the butchers and the bakers and the importance of the goldsmiths is also confirmed. Some

<sup>346</sup> D. Portman, *Exeter Houses 1400-1700*, Exeter, 1966, pp.3, 33-36; J. Thorp, 'The Construction, Appearance and Development of a Merchant's Town House c.1550-1740: 38, North Street, Exeter', *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society*, 70, 2012, pp.220-223.

<sup>347</sup> Ashford, 'Mercantile Debt in Somerset 1500-1550'; id., 'Mercantile Debt Patterns'; N.R. Amor, *From Wool to Cloth*; K. Sugden, S.A. Keibek and L. Shaw Taylor, 'Adam Smith Revisited: coal and the location of woollen manufacture in England before mechanisation 1500-1820', *Cambridge Working Papers in Economic and Social History*, 33, September 2018. I have also drawn upon correspondence with Philip Ashford and Nicholas Amor and the paper presented by the Cambridge authors at the Pre-Modern Towns Group Conference, Birkbeck College, University of London, January, 2015.

questions are raised such as the wider use of the term 'mercier' and 'chapman' in the Common Pleas than in other historical records concerning Exeter and this is discussed below.<sup>348</sup> The importance of a community of dyers, especially resident in Exe Island, is highlighted more clearly by the findings from Common Pleas records than from the freedom, shop fines or other historical sources. The Court of Common Pleas also gives us an insight into the ecclesiastical population, which has not been explored here. The large majority of cases involving Exeter men, a mean in sample years studied of 87.25%, were debt cases.<sup>349</sup> A detailed Appendix has been included which gives the key data extracted from the Common Pleas records.<sup>350</sup>

The occupations of Exeter men and women recorded in the Quarter Sessions papers were noted and analysed for the first years when they are available for Exeter, from 1557 up to 1570.<sup>351</sup> There was no systematic listing of occupations in the records and those of both defendants and plaintiffs were included, though most were defendants. For some entries parishes of residence are given but this is nearly always those outside the city walls, especially St Sidwell. There are a few years missing in the extant documents. The findings from them in Table 3.6 below reinforce the picture of the central importance of the tailors within the city. The merchants were also heavily represented in the cases. The position of other key occupations such as cordwainers and butchers is further evident. The records also attest to the growing importance of the textile trades in the later part of the period as weavers, tuckers and spinsters were appearing fairly frequently. Glovers also were more represented, supporting the notion that the trade may have been becoming more city-based. The importance of yeomen is also evident from these records. Finally rarer occurrences of some occupations are evidenced such as the virginal maker and the sleymaker.

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<sup>348</sup> See 5.1.

<sup>349</sup> The figure is based on all cases involving Exeter men in Common Pleas 1521, 1530, 1543 and 1554. Although a fairly wide range of offences are listed the only other one of any significance was trespass. A discussion of Common Pleas as a historical source is included in 1.7.

<sup>350</sup> See Appendix 13.

<sup>351</sup> DHC, ECA, Quarter Sessions Papers 4 and 5 Philip and Mary, 1-5 Eliz 1, 7 Eliz 1, 9-12 Eliz I.



**TABLE 3.6 EXETER OCCUPATIONS IN QUARTER-SESSIONS PAPERS  
1557-1570**

<b>DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES</b>	MERCHANTS	23
	CHANDLERS	4
	DRAPERS	2
	PEDDLARS	1
	CLOTHIERS	2
<b>CLOTHING TRADES</b>	TAILORS	34
	GLOVERS	6
	HOSIERS	4
	JERKIN MAKERS	2
	CAPPERS	1
<b>TEXTILE TRADES</b>	WEAVERS	9
	TUCKERS	8
	SPINSTERS	6
	SHEARMEN	3
	DYERS	1
	FURRIERS	1
<b>FOOD AND DRINK TRADES</b>	BUTCHERS	10
	BAKERS	6
	BREWERS	5
	VICTUALLERS	3
	COOKS	1
<b>LEATHER TRADES</b>	SHOEMAKERS/CORDWAINERS	14
	SADDLERS	4
	CURRIERS	1
<b>WOOD TRADES</b>	CARPENTERS	2
	CARVERS	1
	SLEYMAKERS	1
	FLETCHERS	1
	VIRGINAL MAKERS	1
<b>METAL TRADES</b>	GOLDSMITHS	7
	CUTLERS	6
	SMITHS	3
	LOCKYERS	2
	BITMAKERS (LORIMERS)	1
	PEWTERERS	1
	PINNERS	1
<b>BUILDING TRADES</b>	HELTERS	1
	PLUMBERS	1
	PAINTERS	1
<b>TRANSPORT TRADES</b>	GROOMS	3
	CARRIERS	1
	INNOLDERS	1
<b>PROFESSIONAL</b>	BARBERS	3
	APOTHECARIES	2
	BOOKBINDERS	2
	STATIONERS	1
	BOOKSELLERS	1
<b>OTHER</b>	YEOMEN	11
	LABOURERS	7
	GENTLEMEN	5
	HUSBANDMEN	2

(Source: DHC, ECA, Exeter Quarter Sessions Rolls, Session Papers)

Table 3.7 below shows occupations recorded in Chancery cases. Three sample periods were studied to determine if any changes took place. Elizabethan Chancery cases contained less information on occupations and so comparable samples of years were chosen from the late-fifteenth century (1467-1484,) the early sixteenth century (1515-1529) and the mid-sixteenth century (1544-1558). The specific years were determined by the arrangement of Chancery cases under the names of the serving Chancellors. The number of cases where an occupation is not designated at all, for plaintiff or defendant, fell over the period. Overall, this source showed an increase in the number of merchants involved in cases, which further reinforces the impression of them at the top of Exeter society, tightening their control over the city. The numbers are too low to be very statistically significant but an increase in the involvement of gentlemen also supports the notion of their heightening importance in the life of the city. Craftsmen such as saddlers and glaziers and especially the tailors ceased to have any prominent role in cases in Chancery by the mid-sixteenth century which supports the contention that their standing was diminishing. The extent of the proportionate increase in merchant involvement in the court, as opposed to other occupations, further reinforces this.

**TABLE 3.7 DESIGNATED OCCUPATIONS OF EXETER RESIDENTS LISTED AS PLAINTIFFS AND DEFENDANTS IN CHANCERY CASES – SAMPLE YEARS FROM 1467 TO 1558.**

YEARS	1467-1484	YEARS	1515-1529	YEARS	1544-1558
OCCUPATION	NUMBER	OCCUPATION	NUMBER	OCCUPATION	NUMBER
GAOL KEEPER	7	MERCHANT	8	MERCHANT	26
MERCHANT	6	GENTLEMAN	8	GENTLEMAN	11
CHAPLAIN	6	CLERK	3	CLERK	4
CLERK	4	WIDOW	3	SERVANT	3
SADDLER	3	TAILOR	2	ESQUIRE	2
PRIEST	3	PRIEST	2	CARRIER	2
DRAPER	2	ESQUIRE	2	DOCTOR OF MEDICINE	1
GLAZIER	2	CUSTOMER	1	VINTNER	1
GENTLEMAN	2	TALLOW CHANDLER	1	ORGAN PLAYER	1
CANON	2	PARSON	1	TREASURER	1
DYER	1	HUSBANDMAN	1	CLOTHIER	1
BELL-MAKER	1	HOSIER	1	KNIGHT	1
CARRIER	1	CARRIER	1	BUTCHER	1
GOLDSMITH	1	GOLDSMITH	1	GOLDSMITH	1
TOWN CLERK	1	TOWN CLERK	1	TOWN CLERK	1
SERGEANT	1	SHOEMAKER	1	CUSTOMS SEARCHER	1

TANNER	1	TANNER	1	SCRIVENER	1
YEOMAN	1	YEOMAN	1	LATE PRIOR	1
CUSTOMER	1			PRISAGE RECEIVER	1
WIDOW	1			WIDOW	1
INNHOLDER	1			INNHOLDER	1
BAKER	1			DEAN	1
PRIOR	1				
SMITH	1				
SPINSTER	1				
CASTLE KEEPER	1				
CHANTER	1				
MERCER	1				
NOT STATED	58	NOT STATED	35	NOT STATED	26

(Source: TNA, C1)

Finally a sample was also taken from the Mayors' Court rolls. These are the records of the weekly court which dealt with a wide range of real and personal actions, fines, wills, deeds and many miscellaneous cases and are thus extremely comprehensive documents. The records of the court for five sample months from September 1521 to September 1522 were studied and the occupation of all plaintiffs and defendants given were noted.<sup>352</sup> This year was selected to overlap with the Military Survey of 1522. Occupations were not recorded systematically in the court rolls. Table 3.8 confirms the importance of the tailors and the merchants in the city economy. Other crafts such as the cappers, tuckers and hoopers were more prominent than might have been expected. The records also include churchmen and the frequency of clerks and chaplains in other court records is corroborated here. No occupation was identified which does not appear in other Exeter records for the time although some individual craftsmen can only be identified from this source such as Peter Bedford the painter and Richard Whytby the carver.

**TABLE 3.8: OCCUPATIONS MOST FREQUENTLY RECORDED IN SAMPLE OF MAYORS' COURT ROLL IN EXETER IN 1522**

OCCUPATION	NUMBER
TAILOR	12
BUTCHER	11
MERCHANT	10
CAPPER	8
SMITH	8
TUCKER	6
CLERK	6
HOOPER	6

<sup>352</sup> DHC, ECA, MCR 12/13 Henry VIII.

CHAPLAIN	6
GENTLEMAN	6

(Source: DHC, ECA, MCR 12/13 Henry VIII)

This multi-source approach to studying occupations has drawn on six main types of sources. The Exeter freemen's records provide the basis for the study but they are fuller for the later years. The shop fines give a rare insight into the middling group of craftsmen and traders just below the freemen and for this reason are very valuable. The four main types of court records used are from both central and local courts. Common Pleas records were especially useful because they have not been drawn upon much for this purpose before and give occupational information for all defendants. Quarter-Sessions, Chancery and Mayor's Court records have been mainly helpful in confirming known patterns, though the latter was a single-year sample and could be explored more fully.

### *The Labourers*

The tradesmen in Exeter were surrounded by a great number of people who earned their living by unskilled labour, though it is impossible to know how many people were in this group. The Military Survey of 1522 bears witness to a large number of persons who were engaged in work such as servants and journeymen, as discussed previously.<sup>353</sup> There was a large group of labourers working as assistants to craftsmen, as fetchers and carriers and on specific building projects. Eighteen men designated as labourers are recorded as defendants in Common Pleas cases between 1475 and 1546. Eight of these were noted as being from St Sidwell, one from St Thomas and two from the nearby St Leonard. In the Quarter-Sessions cases studied half of the labourers were recorded as from St Sidwell. It seems that many of the labourers lived outside the city walls and that there was a concentration of them in St Sidwell.<sup>354</sup> Civic projects such as the building of the canal in the mid 1560s needed a large labour force.<sup>355</sup> Earlier ones had also been undertaken including the

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<sup>353</sup> See 2.2

<sup>354</sup> DHC, ECA, Quarter-Sessions Papers 2, 3, 4, 8, 12 Eliz. I.

<sup>355</sup> Between 1564 and 1566 the first Exeter canal was built as well, as in 1565 the Water Gate and a new stone quay, probably the earliest warehouse structures, and by 1567 the Crane. In 1567 a protective mole against silting was additionally constructed. All this demanded labour. C.G.Henderson, 'The Development of the Exeter Quay 1564-1701' in G.H. Good, R.H. Jones

construction of new conduits and an underground water system, the refurbishing of the Guildhall and the repair of the city walls, all of which demanded large amounts of labour.<sup>356</sup> Numbers of labourers and workmen were recorded being paid by the city. Wages paid to men described as 'workmen' are recorded in 1487/88 for working on repairs to the city walls at the East Gate and for other tasks such as cleaning 'le gutter' at the North Gate in 1499/1500. However, these men are more frequently described as 'labourers' though both terms are used in the same years. They sometimes performed specific tasks such as cleaning earth and sieving to repair a wall at a cistern in 1488/89. In one case in 1492/93 payment was made to 'one other labourer with his horse'. We would not expect to identify labourers in the tax assessments though an exception may be William Jeffrey of St David as there are a number of references to him in the early 1540s. He was assessed on £1 worth of goods.<sup>357</sup> The lading, unloading and cellarage of goods from the ships at Topsham, and at the Exeter quay, also provided much work.<sup>358</sup> The city needed a large number of hauliers and general maintenance men. It was enacted in 1510 that six barrel bearers were to be chosen by the Twenty Four. Barrel bearers were employed by the city in 1534/35 carrying lead from a conduit to the city plumbers' storehouse and from the West Gate to a conduit and the castle. This activity was closely supervised by the council which made ordinances concerning their wage rates, two of which survive from 1567 and 1582.<sup>359</sup> They were paid between 1d and 4d in 1567 for carrying and cellaring barrels of wine, oil and woad. Temporary manual work no doubt provided employment for a large number of the city's able-bodied unskilled men though no reference has been found to women labourers.

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and M.W. Ponsford, ed., *Waterfront Archaeology*, Council for British Archaeology Research Report, 74, London, 1991, pp.124-136.

<sup>356</sup> Stoye, *Water*, pp.51-112; id., *Circled with Stone*, pp.51-85; S.R. Blaylock, 'Exeter Guildhall', *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society*, 48, 1990, pp.123-178; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.126-136.

<sup>357</sup> Stoye, *Circled with Stone*, pp.114, 117, 129; id., *Water*, pp.408-411, 416-17. John Everde, described as a 'workman', paid a shop fine in 1516; DHC, ECA, AB I f.169a.

<sup>358</sup> P. Williams, 'The Trading Community of Topsham 1470-1570', unpublished paper, 2016, discusses other occupations including rope-making, ship's carpenters and mariners at Topsham.

<sup>359</sup> DHC, ECA, AB II, f.195B, AB III, ff.32-34; Stoye, *Water*, p.463.

At the other end of the social scale in the occupations recorded in the court records, especially Common Pleas, gentlemen and yeomen figure largely as the second and third most recorded designations. Both groups are stated to be 'of Exeter'. Horrox saw the urban gentry as a growing but not a new group in the late-fifteenth century, who were often lawyers or in service to the Crown, the local nobility or the towns themselves.<sup>360</sup> The gentlemen were often lawyers or acting as officials for the local nobility and gentry and were important in the city's government, such as providing 12 mayors and three receivers in the period.<sup>361</sup> The Exeter gentlemen and yeomen recorded in Common Pleas cases between 1521 and 1527 have been analysed and linked with taxation records to establish more knowledge of them. Of 26 gentlemen 21 (81%) were recorded as holding goods or lands in the city. The majority held this in intramural parishes with only two in the extramural St Sidwell. Only 9 of the 26 (35%) took up the city freedom. Some were identified as merchants or the sons of merchants, as lawyers and as customs officials. Others were from local gentry families such as the Spekes of Wembworthy and the Copplestons of Colebrooke. Many were of central importance within the city economy and politics such as John Bradmore, who was mayor in 1520, though they were a diverse group.<sup>362</sup> The Exeter gentry fit well with the picture presented by Horrox.

Yeomen as a social group are often ignored by historians within the urban context of this time. In Exeter they existed in quite large numbers. Hartrich has noted that from the 1460s the names of husbandmen, yeomen, and gentlemen occur with greater frequency among the listed professions of those entering the freedom in English towns.<sup>363</sup> McIntosh provides a detailed study of the urban yeoman in Romford where they were investors in residential and commercial property, middlemen in commercial transactions and moneylenders where they were active by the 1520s and 1530s up until the 1590s. In Romford they were often former inn-holders and alehouse-keepers. In Colchester they were also

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<sup>360</sup> Horrox, 'Urban Gentry'.

<sup>361</sup> See 2.1.

<sup>362</sup> John Bradmore was a merchant who was also described as a gentleman.

<sup>363</sup> E. Hartrich, *Politics and the Urban Sector in Fifteenth-Century England*, Oxford, 2019, pp.193-194. She particularly notes this with regard to Canterbury.

brewers and innkeepers.<sup>364</sup> Osborne identified a similar yeoman group in Exeter in the later 1580s.<sup>365</sup> The yeomen were a slightly large group than the gentlemen with 34 Exeter yeomen being recorded between 1521 and 1527 in Common Pleas cases. However, only 8 of these were identified in the subsidies living in a range of six intramural Exeter parishes and four in extramural ones (35% of the total). Three were in St Thomas and one in St Sidwell. The yeomen living in St Thomas were wealthier men, being assessed on goods valued at between £26 and £33 3s 6d. This was not the case with those living in the intramural parishes, where only half of them had goods valued at over £10. Not much is known of them though John Bugbroke was elected as the city sergeant in 1522 and 1523 and served earlier in this office in 1514. He was involved in disputes concerning lands in Clyst Hydon. Henry Voughell was variously also described as a luter and a minstrel. Richard Sentle or Seynthill was also described as a gentleman and was involved in Chancery in land disputes in a number of West Devon parishes.<sup>366</sup>

### *Women in the Trades and Crafts*

No women are recorded entering the freedom in Exeter in the period studied. Margaret Drake was a member of the Merchants' Company in 1560 and 1568 and was the pre-eminent woman trader of the day. Women did take over the businesses of merchants when their husbands died and the role of these women in the trading community of Exeter is explored elsewhere.<sup>367</sup> Exeter women are very rarely found supervising apprentices though in 1467 Thomas Lugge entered the freedom having served a nine-year term with the leading mercer Robert Smyth and his wife Alice.<sup>368</sup> Also in 1553 John Lobdon entered

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<sup>364</sup> M.J. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: The Manor and Liberty of Havering 1500-1620*, Cambridge, 1991 pp.139-144; R.D. Smith, *The Middling Sort and the Politics of Social Reformation: Colchester 1570-1640*, Oxford, 2004, p.20.

<sup>365</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp. 77-78.

<sup>366</sup> On Bugbroke as sergeant: DHC, ECA, AB I f.41a, 51a, 91b, 96a, and on lands TNA C1/950/57/63-65. On Richard Sentle or Seynthill: TNA 1/428/39, 1513/29. The West Devon parishes were Moretonhampstead, Chagford, South Tawton.

<sup>367</sup> See 4.1 and 5.1.

<sup>368</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.55. For Smyth see also *Exeter Freeman*, pp.54, 56. Smyth headed a substantial mercery business. In the 1460s a number of his apprentices entered the freedom and this indicates that he had one of the most flourishing concerns of the day. It is likely that Alice played a significant role in the business and more so by 1467. By then Smyth was also referred to as a merchant but in 1470 he was referred to again as a mercer. This was also the case on

an apprenticeship with the tailor Richard Prouze and 'Rychard hys wyf' but this is the only occurrence uncovered of a tailors' wife having a part in any apprenticeships.<sup>369</sup> In the absence of apprenticeship records women can only really be identified from freedom records and a few other sources.

Women are recorded paying shop fines. Twenty women have been identified. Five of them are clearly noted as widows, and it seems likely that most of the others were too. Ten of the women are recorded as paying for one year only. There are few women paying in kind: Alice Trowe paid with 'a schourte' in 1522 though no other record survives which may provide any link with clothing.<sup>370</sup> This may be a brief indication of the work of one of the women who provided an important element in the tailoring workforce but for whom so little records survive. The same may be true for Alicia Robynatt who paid a shop fine for longer than any of the other women recorded.<sup>371</sup> No real evidence has emerged of independent women traders paying shop fines, though some took over businesses as widows and ran them for a number of years, paying fines that were agreed by the city council. Elizabeth Furse carried on the family business as a hooper in 1534 and 1535 paying a shop fine of 8d having taken over from John Furse who had paid 4d and 8d as a hooper in the years from 1530.<sup>372</sup> More women were paying shop fines in the 1530s and 40s than in the 1510s and 1520s but the trend was not maintained in the 1560s. The later lists only record one woman, Elizabeth Bawst (possibly Best), paying in the West Quarter in 1566/67.<sup>373</sup>

A few women are recorded as defendants in Common Pleas. Mostly they are recorded as widows and their husbands were identified as prominent Exonians. However, spinsters appeared as defendants in the 1470s, 1480s, 1520s, 1530s

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three further occasions in 1470 and 1472. He was city mayor in 1469. See Appendix 27 on the leading Exeter businesses.

<sup>369</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.28b. See 4.1.

<sup>370</sup> DHC, ECA, AB 1 f.188a.

<sup>371</sup> The wife of Robert Robynett is first recorded as paying in 1526, though no other details were given. Alicia Robenett was paying a shop fine of 4d or 8d between 1535 and 1540 and is also recorded as a widow assessed on 20s worth of goods in St Mary Major parish in 1544. She may well have been the widow of Robert Robelet, a Norman who paid on a 10s and 20s wealth assessment in All Hallows Goldsmith Street in 1522 and 1524 respectively. DHC, ECA, AB 1, ff.190a, 191b, 193a; DHC, ECA, Book 156b. ff. 19, 25; *Tudor Exeter*, pp. 11, 38, 46.

<sup>372</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 156b ff. 4, 10, 14, 15, 18.

<sup>373</sup> The name is not common in Exeter at this time. A Thomas Best had been a hooper in St David in the 1520s DHC, ECA, Book 100 f. 177; *Tudor Exeter*, pp. 27, 42.



and 1540s. Four women were also recorded as with the occupation as spinsters in the later Quarter-Sessions records studied. More were identified by their occupation than any other women in the crafts which suggests that it was a major employment for them. Sativole Flemmyng was designated as a shepster in 1549 in Common Pleas and probably worked as a seamstress. In the same court records in 1548 Margery Ratcliffe alias Ralcley was described as both a widow and a chapman. She was the widow of Richard Ratclyff, a wealthy parishioner in St Pancras assessed on £100 of goods in 1544.<sup>374</sup> He was fined 40s by the Twenty Four in 1546 because 'he hath suffered strangers as London and other to sell withyn his house dyvers of merchandisis' though his occupation is not known. Margery also paid a fine for the same offence in 1547, 1548, in 1549 (along with Margaret Wall) and again in 1552, when she was again fined 40s.<sup>375</sup> Margery Ratclyff was no doubt engaged independently as a seller which accords with the description of her as a chapman, and her actions represent the greatest challenge by a woman to the city authorities recorded in the period studied.

Women were involved in the drink trade. Johanna Reve was identified as a widow and a brewer when she was presented for nuisances in 1562.<sup>376</sup> She may have been the widow of a wealthy brewer of St George's parish.<sup>377</sup> Women were also involved in the keeping of common lodging-houses where wine, ale and beer were sold. In 1561 John Bolte and his wife Johan were forbidden to carry on with their business or they were to be exiled from the city. Further they were ordered to immediately 'pull downe the signe which now hangethe at their dore'.<sup>378</sup> Comparisons were made with Kowaleski's study of women's work in late-fourteenth century Exeter.<sup>379</sup> Like then, wealthy merchants' widows did

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<sup>374</sup> Ratclyff was a city bailiff in 1534, became a member of the town council in 1543 and was re-instated to it in 1547.

<sup>375</sup> DHC, ECA, AB II, ff.55b, 73b, 75b, 85a, 108a, 121a.

<sup>376</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 100, f.76.

<sup>377</sup> DHC, ECA, AB II ff.75b, 104b, *Tudor Exeter*, pp. 48, 55; *Exeter Freeman*, pp. 73, 91, 93; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.82-83. Nicholas Reve had faced a heavy fine of 20 marks, and expulsion from the Twenty Four in 1549 for leading the actions of the city brewers in keeping the price of beer and ale excessively high. The freedom records suggest that her son may have continued the brewing business and that another son may have been apprenticed to the prominent goldsmith, John Jones.

<sup>378</sup> DHC, AB, IV f.93.

<sup>379</sup> M.Kowaleski, 'Women and Work in a Market Town: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century' in B.Hanawalt, ed., *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial Europe*, Bloomington, 1986, pp.145-164.

carry on their businesses but this study does not provide as much evidence for them working as petty retailers. Some may have followed different occupations from their husbands or managed their own successfully independent businesses as innkeepers or in the food and drink trades, as Whittle concludes, but there is not much evidence of this found in the Exeter records.<sup>380</sup> Their role as brewers had significantly reduced, though they were still involved in wine and ale-selling. As in the fourteenth century their role in the sixteenth century was most evident in the textile and clothing trades but none of their work in the leather trades and candle making has been discovered. Within the textile and clothing trades their work was still mainly in the more low status and marginal roles.

### *The Occupational Character of Parishes*

Occupational topography was extremely mixed in Exeter, as in most of the early modern towns. Trades which created strong smells were usually carried out in extramural parishes as were those which needed running water such as dyeing, tucking and milling. Osborne has confirmed this occupational topography though noted that the more centrally situated St George was Exeter's butchering centre. The professional trades concentrated in the city centre. This study helps to confirm her conclusions that the carrying businesses were situated outside the city and that many labourers also came from the extramural parishes. However, inns may have been more widely situated.<sup>381</sup> Building workers may also have lived in a wider range of places in the earlier Tudor period than later. Many occupations can be traced across the city as Osborne concluded.<sup>382</sup>

Some parish, local and national court records have been analysed to ascertain further the occupational character of some intramural and extramural parishes. Occasionally parish baptismal records do systematically record the occupations of fathers. Tables 3.9 and 3.10 below give us an insight into St Petrock for a few

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<sup>380</sup> J. Whittle, 'Enterprising Widows and Active Wives: women's unpaid work in the household economy of early modern England', *History of the Family*, 19:3, 2014, pp.283-300.

<sup>381</sup> J.Hare, 'Inns, Innkeepers and the Society of Later Medieval England 1350-1600', *Journal of Medieval History*, 39:4, 2013, pp. 477-497.

<sup>382</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp.85-87.

years from the time of the inauguration of parish registers from 1538 up until 1546. St Petrock was the city's wealthiest parish and the parish register evidence confirms the dominance of the merchants within it, followed by tailors and drapers. The extent of the gap between the number of merchant fathers and other occupations is pronounced. The other fathers having children baptised were mostly from prominent trades, though some were from poorer trades such as a capper. This type of material survives only for St Petrock for the period studied.

**TABLE 3.9 PARISH OF ST PETROCK BAPTISMS: THE OCCUPATIONS OF FATHERS 1539-1546**

STATED OCCUPATION OF FATHER	NUMBER WITHIN PARISH
MERCHANT	11
TAILOR	5
DRAPER-TAILOR	1
DRAPER	1
GOLDSMITH	1
CAPPER	1
SHOEMAKER	1
CHAPLAIN CLERK	1

**TABLE 3.10 FATHERS AND OCCUPATIONS: WEALTH AND BAPTISM YEARS IN ST PETROCK 1538-1546.**

NAME OF FATHER	YEAR/S OF BAPTISMS	OCCUPATION IN PARISH REGISTER	LAY SUBSIDY 1544
ROBERT BOSTOCKE	1539/40/42/44/46	CHAPLAIN /CLERK	GOODS £7
WILLIAM SELDON	1539/42/43/44	MERCHANT	GOODS £20
THOMAS HUNT	1539/40/42/44/46	DRAPER	GOODS £200
JOHN ROBINS	1539/41/42	MERCHANT	GOODS £9
JOHN MIDWINTER	1539/41/43/45	MERCHANT	GOODS 200 MARKS
GRIFFIN AMEREDITH	1540/45	DRAPER/TAILOR	LANDS £40
THOMAS MONDAY	1541/42	MERCHANT	NOT INCLUDED
JOHN NICHOLE(S)	1541/42/44	TAILOR	GOODS £1 (ALIEN)
WILLIAM PERSON	1541/42/44	MERCHANT	GOODS £20
RICHARD MAYNARD	1541/43/44/45	MERCHANT	GOODS £40
HENRY BETTIE	1541/42/44	TAILOR	NOT INCLUDED
ROBERT HUNT	1542/43/44/46	MERCHANT	GOODS £20
HUGH SOUTHEY	1542/45	TAILOR	GOODS £9
JOHN DRAKE	1542/44/45	MERCHANT	GOODS

			£100
RICHARD LYMKES	1542	MERCHANT	NOT INCLUDED
RICHARD HAWXHE	1542	CAPPER	GOODS £13
WILLIAM TUCKFIELD	1543	MERCHANT	GOODS £2
THOMAS ARDRON	1543	TAILOR	NOT INCLUDED
PHILIP MAYE	1544/45	MERCHANT	GOODS £30
ALEXANDER TRIGGS	1544/45	TAILOR	GOODS £5
RICHARD MARTYN	1545/46	SHOEMAKER	NOT INCLUDED
WILLIAM PINFOLD	1546	GOLDSMITH	NOT INCLUDED

(Source: DHC, Exeter St.Petrock PR1)

The Quarter-Sessions records were used to indicate the occupational character of the extramural parish of St Sidwell. Tables 3.11 and 3.12 suggest its semi-rural nature at the time. A similar analysis was also conducted for the Common Pleas records in the earlier sixteenth century, as presented below. This corroborates the semi-rural character of the leading occupations for an earlier and longer time period. Poorer groups such as spinsters are also evident. However, there were also a number of gentlemen noted who held land in the parish. St Sidwell may have been more rural in the earlier period and evolved into the more densely populated poorer area presented by historians such as Slack in the later Elizabethan and early Stuart period.<sup>383</sup> Hogenberg's map and the earliest maps of St Sidwell's Fee from about 1590 do suggest some open spaces as well as density of housing in the parish. Osborne noted that the parish was not the city's poorest and that its average tax assessments were increasing by 1586.<sup>384</sup>

**TABLE 3.11 OCCUPATIONS IN ST SIDWELL IN QUARTER-SESSIONS ROLLS 1557-1570**

YEOMEN	4
BREWERS	4
LABOURERS	3
TAILORS	2
CORDWAINERS	2

<sup>383</sup> Slack, *Impact*, pp.114-119.

<sup>384</sup> Harte et al., *Description*, Vol. 2, Map of the Fee of St Sidwell facing p.100; Stoye, *Circled With Stone*, Plate 5; Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', p.88.

HUSBANDMEN	2
HELIERS	1
BAKERS	1
WEAVERS	1
CUTLERS	1
SMITHS	1
CARPENTERS	1
VIRGINAL MAKERS	1
STATIONERS	1

(Source: DHC, ECA, Exeter Quarter-Sessions Papers 4& 5 P & M-12 Eliz.1)

**TABLE 3.12 OCCUPATIONS OF ST SIDWELL DEFENDANTS IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS 1470-1554**

<b>1470-1519</b>		<b>1521-1554</b>	
<b>TRADE/TERM GIVEN</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>TRADE/TERM GIVEN</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
YEOMAN	7	GENTLEMAN	5
GENTLEMAN	6	YEOMAN	4
LABOURER	6	SPINSTER	4
CARRIER	4	LABOURER	3
HUSBANDMAN	2	CARRIER	2
BREWER	2	MASON	2
WIDOW	2	BUTCHER	2
WEAVER	1	HUSBANDMAN	1
TUCKER	1	BREWER	1
BAKER	1	MERCER	1
TAILOR	1	WIDOW	1
MASON	1	CARPENTER	1
MERCHANT	1	SHEARMAN	1
SMITH	1	CORDWAINER	1
CARPENTER	1	TANNER	1
ESQUIRE	1	SHIPSTER	1
CLERK	1	FREEMASON	1
CHAPLAIN	1	MINSTREL	1
		LUTER	1
		CHAPLAIN	1

(Source: CP40; [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices//CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices//CP40_Indices.html))

Historical records from local and national courts have been used here to give indications of the occupational character of a few other Exeter parishes. Common Pleas records can give some indications with regard to the extramural parishes of St David, and St Edmund. From Table 3.13 below the central importance of Exe Island and St Edmund in the dyeing industry is evident. This is helpful as dyers may be under-represented in some of the other historical sources for Exeter. Tanning, linked with cattle rearing and butchering, possibly as a bi-employment, is very evident in St David's and St David's Down as shown in Table 3.13.

**TABLE 3.13: OCCUPATIONS OF ST EDMUND/EXE ISLAND AND ST DAVID DEFENDANTS IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS 1470-1554**

**EXE ISLAND (ST EDMUND)**

1470-1554	NUMBER
TRADE/TERM GIVEN	
DYER	12
HUSBANDMAN	2
TANNER	1
WEAVER	1
BAKER	1

**ST DAVID**

1470-1554	NUMBER
TRADE/TERM GIVEN	
TANNER	6
DYER	3
MILLER	1
YEOMAN	1
HUSBANDMAN	1

(Source: CP40; [http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices//CP40\\_Indices.html](http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices//CP40_Indices.html))

*Conclusion*

Much insight into the occupational structure of the early modern town is gained from using a wider variety of sources than simply the freemen's records. There are some clear deficiencies in the Exeter freemen records which are discussed elsewhere in this study.<sup>385</sup>

The freemen's records indicate that the number of trades followed by people in Exeter increased in the latter half of the sixteenth century. From 1501 to 1550 49 trades were represented in the freemen's ranks and from 1551 to 1600 this had increased to 81, a rise of 39.5%. Some comparisons were made with other towns, notably York and Norwich<sup>386</sup> With the additional trades found in the shop fines we can say that there were about 90 to 100 crafts practised in Tudor Exeter. This compares well with other towns such as York, where there were also about 90 to 100 crafts.<sup>387</sup> In Norwich 79 trades were registered in 1525

<sup>385</sup> See 1.9 and Appendix 8.

<sup>386</sup> Pound, *Tudor and Stuart Norwich*, pp. 177-183; Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp 156-159.

<sup>387</sup> Palliser, *Tudor York*, pp. 146-178 discusses the city's occupational structure.

rising to 102 in 1569.<sup>388</sup> In Winchester 65 trades have been located in the first half of the sixteenth century rising to 87 in the Elizabethan era.<sup>389</sup> Exeter provided the same range of services as most other provincial capitals.

In Exeter in the sixteenth century the distributive trades accounted for about a quarter of the freemen's admissions and thus were of major importance in the city's economy. Exeter's role as the regional market centre and entrepot of Devon and much of the South West has been emphasised by Kowaleski and MacCaffrey and this was the defining feature of Exeter's economy. Merchants were more dominant than in the other major provincial cities. This is confirmed in all of the types of records studied. However, in Exeter the merchant group included mercers, chapmen and chandlers and the terms were more interchangeable than has been commonly supposed.<sup>390</sup> Exeter was one of those large port towns in England analysed by Christopher Dyer where a key economic role was the importing and distribution of luxury goods.<sup>391</sup>

The importance of manufacturing in Exeter must be stressed. Between 1450 and 1603 nearly half of all the freemen admitted were working in the manufacturing crafts. It can be seen in the range of records that the group rising in economic importance were the textile workers as the city became a more notable centre of cloth production as well as cloth finishing and distribution. This was becoming especially true by the 1560s when weavers and tuckers or fullers were more evident. The other records studied have yielded much more evidence of women working as spinsters in the city. It has also been possible to trace back more variety and diversification in cloth production to a much earlier date though some new trades, such as felt-makers, were emerging by the mid-sixteenth century. The dyeing industry has been seen to be much more important than previously suggested. Industrial concentrations such as that in Exe Island are comparable with tanning and dyeing in the North East Quarter and the East part of the Soke of Winchester.<sup>392</sup> It was in the organisation of the cloth trade that Exeter lagged behind, though this study has identified Exeter

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<sup>388</sup> Pound, 'Social and Trade Structure', pp.49-69; id., *Tudor and Stuart Norwich*, pp. 46-56.

<sup>389</sup> Rosen, 'Economic and Social Aspects', pp.198-201.

<sup>390</sup> See 5.1.

<sup>391</sup> C. Dyer, 'Luxury Goods in Medieval England' in B. Dodds and C.D. Liddy, ed., *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell*, Woodbridge, 2011, pp.217-238.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., p.166.

clothiers in the 1540s. Clothiers were mainly concentrated in the smaller East Devon towns, especially Tiverton.<sup>393</sup>

The central role of the clothing trades was less obvious as the century progressed, though the tailors were more prominent than in any other provincial town, except possibly York, and this has been corroborated across a range of records. With regard to headgear the mystery of the lack of cappers in Exeter has been partly addressed by the numbers of them paying shop fines. The cappers were of much lower status and economic significance than in many other cities, especially Coventry. However, hatmaking, which rested on alien leadership and expertise, developed considerably.

The fortunes of the leather trades varied though they had played a larger role in late-fifteenth century Exeter.<sup>394</sup> Saddlers, skimmers and leather-dressing declined. Cordwainers/shoemakers are also especially evident in the economic layer which paid shop fines. Gloving was carried out in the 1470s and flourishing by the mid-sixteenth century but court records suggest that this trade may have been carried out in the extramural parishes, especially St. Thomas. The use of a wider range of records has made it possible to uncover evidence of rarely documented occupations such as horners.<sup>395</sup>

Metal and wood manufacture remained constant within Exeter's economy. The prominence of Exeter's goldsmiths has been identified by contemporaries and historians. This study has made it more possible to uncover evidence of them in the pre-Elizabethan years. Also distinctions within the craft have been identified as groups of lesser and more prosperous goldsmiths were probably serving different clienteles.<sup>396</sup> It has also been possible to uncover some of the wider

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<sup>393</sup> Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.10, 27-28, 33-37.

<sup>394</sup> Kowaleski, 'Town and Country' pp.64-66, 68.

<sup>395</sup> DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff.170b, 168a.; *Tudor Exeter*, p.16 (Ketyll); AB 1 ff.175b, 176a; *Tudor Exeter*, p.4 (Horner); CP 40/983; A. MacGregor, 'Antler, Bone and Horn', in J. Blair and N. Ramsey ed. *English Medieval Industries*, London, 2001, pp. 370-376 especially p.373.

<sup>396</sup> G. Edelen, ed., *William Harrison's The Description of England*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1968, p.440. Chanter, 'Exeter Goldsmiths Guild'; Flavin, 'Decorative Arts', pp.34-42; DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff. 38a,160a, 164a, 165a, 165b, 167a, 168a, 169a, 171b, 172b, 174b, 175a, 176a, 178a, 181b, 183a, 184a, 183b, 184b, 186a, 188a, 190a, 191b,192a, 193b; ECA, Exeter Quarter Sessions Papers 2,3,8,12 Eliz.;

TNA,CP40/837,841,853,861,888,907,911,943,951,971,983,998,1046,1055,1057,1064,1076,1084, 1092,1116,1157CP40/837,841,853,861,888,907,911,943,951,971,983,998,1046,1055,1057, 1064,1076,1084,1092,1116,1157.



work which bellfounders undertook as part of their jobs.<sup>397</sup> More pewterers have been identified in the city, suggesting the importance of the craft, and their work was spread more widely across a range of parishes than the Holy Trinity/St Mary Major area.<sup>398</sup> The importance of cutlers developed later in the period studied, though a wider variety of small-scale metal craftsmen have been identified working at a much earlier time.<sup>399</sup>

The food and drink trade were in demand, serving an expanding population. Butchers, bakers and brewers were all confirmed as being of significance in a range of sources and all of them came into conflict with the city council. Brewing became more of a business controlled by men though women were still important in the other liquor trades.<sup>400</sup> This work has confirmed the lack of involvement of Exonians in the fish trades as there were few Exeter based fishmongers and fishers. Disputes concerning the sale of fish at the city's Shrovetide fair raged in 1564 when the Salcombe fishers had their fish 'stayed in their shops yn the highe streete'.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Such as repairing chimneys. DHC,ECA ED/M 896; Stoyle, *Circled With Stone*, p.115; TNA C1/284/5, C1/148/47; DHC, ECA, AB1 ff.181a, 183a; H. Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, Oxford, 1989, p.75; TNA C1/170/25; [www.bellfounders.net](http://www.bellfounders.net). Robert Russell brought a case for debt against the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral in 1463. Russell entered the Exeter freedom in 1459 paying a fine of £1. *Exeter Freeman*, pp.53, 62; TNA, CP 40/1068, C1/281/31. Baker was a defendant in Common Pleas in 1500; TNA, CP 40/951; [www.bellfounders.net](http://www.bellfounders.net); DHC, ECA, Book 156b. f.42, *Tudor Exeter*, p.46 ;C. Ponsford, *Time in Exeter*, Exeter 1978, p.56; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.75. John Sherck is also recorded as a bellfounder in 1552; DHC, ECA, ED/M/1088.

<sup>398</sup> Homer, 'Exeter Pewterers'; J. Hatcher and T.C. Barker, *A History of British Pewter*, London, 1974, pp.73-74 notes that two Exeter pewterers were enrolled in the London guild between 1474 and 1476; Stoyle, *Circled with Stone*, pp.121, 123,133,136; *Exeter Freeman*, pp.70, 73; DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff. 194b, 193b; DHC, ECA,Exeter Quarter-Sessions Papers I Eliz.1; TNA, CP 40/1057. The pewterers identified from the shop fines were William Edmond, James Lovyll, Richard Bronnmede or Brownmede, Nicholas Goodyng and Peter Spryng. DHC, ECA, AB I ff.175b, 176b, 159b, 160a, 171b, 172a, 169a, 169b, 167a, 164a, 178a, 181a, 182b, 183b, 194b; Book 156b f.18. William Beard and Henry Colton are also designated as pewterers in Common Pleas. TNA, CP 40/853, 990,1046,1057; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.7, 13,36,37; Stoyle, *Water*, pp.80,82,450; DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff .24a, 176b,172A.

<sup>399</sup> DHC, ECA, ED/M /1060 DHC, ECA, Quarter-Sessions Papers 1,2, 3 Eliz.1; DHC, ECA, Book 100 ff.22,24,73,122. DHC, ECA, Orphans Court Inventory no. 26.

<sup>400</sup> DHC, ECA, ED/M 981; DHC, ECA,Quarter-Sessions Papers 3,4,9 Eliz.1; Kowaleski, *Local Markets* pp.132-144; J.M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World 1300-1600*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 145-149 (pp.30,41-42,46,48,51,55-56,63,99 also include references to Exeter and the changing gendering of the trade). DHC, ECA, AB I, ff.48a, 57a; AB III f.189; AB IV f.59.

<sup>401</sup> H. Fox, *The Evolution of the Fishing Village:Landscape and Society Along the South Devon Coast 1086-1550*, Oxford, 2001, pp.94-98; Kowaleski, *Local Markets* pp.311-318; *HMC Report*, p.278 (noting 'trestalls' and tables for the selling of fish at markets and fairs in 1437);

Much more evidence of medical and legal men working in Exeter is evident. Groups not recorded in the freemen's records such as schoolmasters and musicians, other than the city waits, were also traced.<sup>402</sup>

The use of a greater range of historical sources has been especially important in exploring some of the less economically prominent occupations. The building trades in particular, have been shown to have employed far more men than study of the freedom records has suggested.<sup>403</sup> The building trades were

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Harte et al., *Description*, pp.553-554,557, 848-849, 900, 917; *Exeter Freemen*, pp.51,54, 65; DHC, ECA Book 157 f.120.

<sup>402</sup> For apothecaries, doctors, surgeons and physicians: DHC, ECA, ED/M 868; *Exeter Freemen* pp.51,66, 84, 87,96; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.3,4,5; TNA,CP40/888,959,971; C1/111/10; DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff. 174b, 176a; R.S. Roberts, 'The Personnel and Practice of Medicine in Tudor and Stuart England Part 1 - The Provinces', *Medical History*, 6, 1962, pp.363-382; Pelling, 'Occupational Diversity'; Rowe and Trease, 'Thomas Baskerville'; Rowe and Trease, '1572 Bill'; DHC, ECA, Orphans Court Inventory no.62. The best recorded are John Weston between 1484 and 1505 and Nicholas Lymet (discussed in Chapter 5) between 1523 and 1554. Page, *Letters of Denization*; Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp.133,139 149-151, 339-40; TNA C1/350/47, C1/353/26; DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff.190a. 168a. For barbers and other medical men: Pelling, 'Occupational Diversity', pp.208-211.213-220; *Letters and Papers Henry VIII*, Vol. IV, Part 1, no. 771; TNA, C1/380/33, C1/458/6; CP40/841,861,871,907,911,919,1005B,1038,1092,1096; DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff. 159a, 164b, 167b, 170a 171b, 173a,178b,181b, 183a, 183b,186b, 188b, 190b, 192a, 193b; AB IV f.163; Book 100 f.55, Book 156b ff.4,6,10,13; Quarter -Sessions Papers 4,8,12 Eliz. I; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.4, 15; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.100-101. For the legal occupations: K. L. Bevan, 'Clerks and Scriveners: Legal Literacy and Access to Justice in Late Medieval England', University of Exeter Ph.D., 2013 (focussed on Exeter, Bristol, Bridgwater and Southampton), 40, 97, 101,105-106,110-112, 132, 219-224,233-240; DHC, ECA, Orphans Court Inventory no. 2; Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp.480-501; TNA, CP40/883; DHC, ECA, AB 1 f.164b; Book 156b ff.1-42; *Exeter Freemen*, p.64; J. Youings, 'The Council of the West' *TRHS*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 10, 1960, pp.41-59; H. Kleineke, 'The Widening Gap: The Practice of Parliamentary Borough Elections in Devon and Cornwall in the Fifteenth Century', *Parliamentary History*, 23:1, 2004, p.131. For publishers and stationers: *Exeter Freemen* pp.72, 75,80, 83,87; DHC,ECA, AB I ff. 159a,164a, 164b, 167a, 167b, 169a,171b,174b,176b 178b,181b, Book 156b ff.1-42; Exeter Quarter -Sessions Papers 4 Eliz. 1, 9 Eliz. 1; Book 185 no.10 within the Merchants' Company dispute describes a stationer with a stall; Book 100 f.71; Orme, 'Martin Coeffyn'; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.9,36; TNA, CP40/837,871,940,919. For schoolmasters, and musicians: DHC, ECA, Book 156b f.11; DHC,ECA AB I ff. 89a,188b,190b Exeter Quarter Sessions Papers 4 Eliz.I ; Orphans' Court Inventories nos. 24, 28; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.186; [www.exclassics.com/foxe/foxe180htm](http://www.exclassics.com/foxe/foxe180htm); N Orme, *Education in the West of England 1066-1548*, Exeter, 1976, pp.46,100. TNA, CP40/ 1068 ; TNA C1/586/1; *Tudor Exeter*, p. 24; H.Lloyd Parry, *The History of the Exeter Guildhall and the Life Within*, Exeter, 1936, pp.157-159 citing references to the waits from 1476 onwards; *Exeter Freemen* pp. 83,105.

<sup>403</sup> Phythian-Adams, 'Economic and Social Structure', p.16.; D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England 1450-1750*, Cambridge,1995, pp.16-17,20, 22-25,51,160; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.163; DHC, ECA, ED/M/926; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.92-95;TNA, CP 40/841,853,1046,1127; *Exeter Freemen*, pp.54,56,70,90; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.14.,35,38,41,45,47, 49,52,54,55,58; L.F.Salzman, *Building in England Down to 1540 -A Documentary History*, Oxford, 1952, pp.477-478, 540-541; Stoyale, *Circled with Stone*, pp.57-64.,72,115-118,121-123,125-128,130-131,133-134,137-138,186; id., *Water*, pp.45-46, 123-4, 159,165-166,397-402,404,406,408,411-412,414-19,423,427,433-436,439,441,446,448,450-451,453,455-456,461-464,466,468; DHC, ECA,

important by the late fifteenth century such masons, tilers, helliers and slaters. Other building workers, such as pavers, were also working in Exeter in the 1470s and 1480s. It has also been possible to identify a wide number of labouring men and workmen in the city. Although they cannot be quantified this work must have provided employment for a large number of adult males.<sup>404</sup> No evidence of women labourers has emerged for this period. Overall, women were a hidden workforce who were most evident in the textile and clothing and drink trades. Very few independent women in the trades and crafts have been identified. Within the transport trades the existence of a number of Exeter carriers' businesses has also been established.<sup>405</sup>

At the other end of the social scale the presence of gentlemen and yeoman is evident. In the early 1520s there was a significant group of resident gentlemen living in the intramural parishes who were often lawyers, officials and merchants. There were some prospering yeomen living in the extramural parishes and others who were possibly struggling more in the city.

Occupational topography was extremely mixed in Exeter. The leading trades of the merchants and tailors congregated in central parishes such as St Petrock. The population of St Sidwell was more mixed but not so economically marginal as it was to become in the latter sixteenth century. The extra mural parishes were much more varied from the industrial St Edmund to the more pastoral St David.

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Receiver's Account 1539/40; DHC, ECA, Book 100 ff.70,86,93,13; DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff. 167a, 179a,183b,189a.; DHC, ECA, Quarter-Sessions Papers 8 Eliz.; TNA, CP40/861,871,911,919,943,959,1005B,1092,1031,1068,1096.

<sup>404</sup> DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff. 167a,179a, 183b, 189a; Receiver's Account, 1539/40; ED/M/926;Book 100 ff.70,86,93, 131; Quarter-Sessions Papers 8 Eliz.1; TNA, CP 40/841,853,861, 871, 911, 919,943, 959, 1005B, 1046,1127,1031,1068,1092, 1096; *Exeter Freeman*, pp. 54,56,70,90; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.14, 35, 38, 41,45, 47, 49,52, 54, 55, 58; Stoye, *Circled with Stone*, pp.57-62,64,72, 115-117,121-131,133-134,137- 138, 186; id., *Water* pp. 46, 123-124 ,159,165-66, 397,398-402, 404,406, 408,411-12, 414-19,423, 427,433-36,439, 441, 446, 448, 450-51,453, 455-56, 461-65, 466, 468; Phythian-Adams, 'Economic and Social Structure', p.16; Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp.16-17, 20, 22-25, 51,160; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.163; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.92-95; Salzman, *Building*, pp.477-478, 540-541. John Lake from Dawlish was admitted in 1461 as the apprentice of the tiler Henry Dollinge (who himself became a freeman in 1442) and Lake's own apprentice John Piers from Bincome in Over Stowey became a freeman in 1469 when Lake is recorded as a tiler. John Piers had served an eight year apprenticeship so must have joined Lake soon after he became a freeman;

<sup>405</sup> TNA C1/46/33, C1/46/60, STAC 1/2/78;DHC, ECA, AB II f.157a; *Exeter Freeman*, p.96.

Kowaleski's study of Exeter's occupations in the late fourteenth century offers a comparison. The distributive trades led the city then too. The metal and leather trades occupied a similar position in the hierarchy. Hostellers and professional and administrative groups were also of importance in the earlier period. The building trades were more evident then, though the predominant group were carpenters.<sup>406</sup> It is with the clothing and textile trades that we can see a real difference as they were less important in the fourteenth century when few dyers and shearmen especially were identified. If we look forwards towards McCaffrey's work based on the freemen's records from 1620 to 1640 the greater importance then of wholesaling and textile processing is apparent, though this study has established that the origins of this change were well under way by the 1560s.

The total documented number of tradesmen and craftsmen in Exeter are significantly less than those for Norwich and York and therefore conclusions may be less reliable. In York for most of the sixteenth century the crafts were dominated by the clothing and the food and drink trades, with only the distributive group approaching them. The distributive trades played a more important role in Exeter than elsewhere. The textile industry was beginning to undergo significant growth under Elizabeth, though this was as not as great as that in Norwich. All of the towns had important clothing industries supplying swelling populations. The position of individual trades was broadly comparable in Exeter and York. In both towns merchants were the dominant economic group, followed by the tailors. In York in the third quarter of the sixteenth century the tailors temporarily displaced the merchants, a threat that had been foreshadowed in Exeter a century earlier but was not to be repeated. Exeter's economy was undergoing a significant diversification too as the city established itself, in Hooker's phrase, as: 'the metropole and Emporium of the Weste parties of England'.

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<sup>406</sup> Carpenters could be significant citizens such as Robert Carow, a member of the Oxford town council in 1518-22 and 1529. His inventory is printed in J. Harvey, *Medieval Craftsmen*, London, 1975, pp.200-202.

### 3.2 Minor Guilds in the City of Exeter

#### *The Minor Guilds*

The crafts and trades of Exeter discussed above were represented by a number of guilds by the late fifteenth century. The Tailors' Guild and the Merchants' Company are discussed elsewhere in this study.<sup>407</sup> However, there were a number of other guilds in existence. Kowalseki has noted that craft guilds developed slowly in Exeter and that 'throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there were only hints of loose craft affiliations' though there is clear evidence of the election of wardens in some crafts well before guilds were formally organised. She identifies clearer organisations by the 1430s but suggests that the development of guilds was severely weakened by the restrictive attitude of the city council.<sup>408</sup> Rose-Troup assembled a good deal of evidence concerning the cordwainers, the bakers, the skimmers and the weavers, tuckers and shearmen with some information on the cappers and barber-surgeons, before the Reformation. Cotton also gave an account of Exeter's guilds.<sup>409</sup> MacCaffrey considered that guilds 'abounded' in fifteenth century Exeter, though there was 'no great medieval flowering' as in some English cities and that only the tailors had any great power. However, by the Elizabethan period he thought that the state of most of Exeter's guilds was 'difficult to describe' and that most were 'unstable and even ephemeral'.<sup>410</sup> The history of individual guilds has not been undertaken as only the Merchants, the Tailors and the Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen have extant document collections. The history of the last, which survives, with its guild hall in Fore Street up to the present day, was written by Youings.<sup>411</sup> The history of the other minor guilds at this time can only be traced through scattered references in mostly local, and some national, document collections. This section analyses

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<sup>407</sup> See 4.2 and Chapter 6.

<sup>408</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets* pp.93-94, 99-101, 140-141, 188. Wardens were elected by the butchers in 1384, the shoemakers and tanners in 1387, the smiths in 1410. She identifies guild activities by the glovers in 1329, the shoemakers in 1352, the skimmers in 1413 and 1426-31. She suggests that the cordwainers, skimmers, bakers and smiths all possessed some craft organisation by the 1430s and that the weavers, tuckers and shearmen were organised by 1459 and the tailors had their royal charter by 1466.

<sup>409</sup> F. Rose-Troup, 'The Kalenders and the Exeter Trade Gilds before the Reformation,' *TDA*, 44, 1912, especially pp.415-430; W. Cotton, 'Some Account of the Ancient Guilds of the City of Exeter', *TDA*, 5, 1872, pp.115-138.

<sup>410</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.18, 83, 86-88.

<sup>411</sup> Youings, *Tuckers Hall*, pp.1-65 covers the Tudor period.

the known membership of the guilds and establishes some sense of the relative importance of them in early Tudor Exeter to set the merchants and tailors in their wider context.

Hooker was interested in the development of the guilds and listed 11 in his *Description of the City*.<sup>412</sup> He suggested the existence of 11 or 12 guilds in Exeter by the 1560s, though the evidence from guilds contributing to the Midsummer watches include smaller numbers: five in 1549, eight in 1561 and five in 1563.<sup>413</sup>

**TABLE 3.14 THE GUILDS IN EXETER 1549-1579**

SOURCE	GUILDS NAMED	DATE	NUMBER
Midsummer watch (DHC,ECA,AB II f.103b)	Tailors, Weavers and Tuckers, Shoemakers, Bakers, Brewers	1549	5
Midsummer watch (DHC,ECA,AB IV f.117)	Butchers, Smiths and Cutlers,Glovers and Skinners,Bakers,Shoemakers,Tuckers and Weavers,Tailors, Merchants, Company of 'citizens being of no companies'.	1561	8
Midsummer watch (DHC ECA,AB III f.104)	Tuckers and Weavers, Bakers, Cappers, Skinners, Smiths	1563	5
John Hooker, <i>Description</i> pp.825-827.	Tailors, Merchants,Cordwainers,, Brewers,Cappers and Haberdashers, Tuckers and Weavers, Skinners and Glovers, Smiths and Cutlers, Coopers and Helliers, Butchers, Bakers	1579	11
John Hooker, <i>Description</i> pp.892-892.	1.Glovers, Furriers and Whitawers, 2. Blacksmiths, Cutlers, Farriers, Billmakers, Spurriers and Saddlers	1579	Additional 2

In total, there is evidence that 32 occupations had formed guilds, or were part of guild conglomerations, before 1570. The largest representation throughout the period was in the leather, textile and clothing trades. By the last decade studied many of the metal trades were also represented in an amalgamated guild. The main food and drink trades of bakers, butchers and brewers had guilds. The Merchants' Company contained men following other distributive occupations. The striking omission was in the wood trades where no evidence of guild organisation is evident until the coopers and helliers in 1579 and then there is

<sup>412</sup> Harte et al., *Description*, pp.825-827.

<sup>413</sup> DHC, ECA, AB II f. 103b,AB III f.104,AB IV f.117.

no other mention until the later 1580s, when a conglomeration was formed. Kramer suggested that bowyers and fletchers were often part of smaller associations in the towns.<sup>414</sup> The number of craftsmen in each of these crafts was probably too low to allow any specific earlier formations. The evidence for a barber-surgeons guild is slight.<sup>415</sup> There were no guilds of transport occupations.

The relative wealth of the guilds in the city at that time can be ascertained from the city corn accounts for December, 1562 which list contributions made by a group of guilds for the purchasing of additional grain supplies for the city at a time of dearth.<sup>416</sup> These were the major guilds existing then.

**TABLE 3.15 CONTRIBUTIONS BY EXETER GUILDS TO CITY CORN PURCHASES DECEMBER 1562**

GUILD	AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED
MERCHANTS	£62 15s
TAILORS	£19 8s 4d
BAKERS	£14 20d.
TUCKERS	£12 7d 4d
CORDWAINERS	£10 3s 6d
CUTLERS	£8 12s
GLOVERS	£5

(Source: DHC, ECA Book 229 ff.1a-1b)

With regard to individual guilds the papers emanating from the disputes concerning the foundation of the Merchants' Company give some names of guild masters in 1559. They claimed to form the leadership of seven guilds, though the merchants contended that there were no guilds of brewers, cappers and dyers in the city at that time and that three of the leaders were not freemen. They also disputed the role of Ambrose Howell as master of the weavers and tuckers, stating that it was Simon Jane.<sup>417</sup> Eight guild masters and one guild

<sup>414</sup> S. Kramer, *The English Craft Gilds: Studies in their Progress and Decline*, New York, 1927, p.17.

<sup>415</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51, f.323b; Book 52f.511; Rose Troup, 'Kalenders', p.428.

<sup>416</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 229 ff.1a-1b, John Hookers' account of 'the monye receved and paid for the grayne bought at Plymouth the xxvith of December 1562. MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.85 discusses these actions in 1555 and 1597.

<sup>417</sup> Their contentions are of mixed authenticity. Richard Wylls had become free as a brewer in 1546 but William Mylford only entered the freedom as a capper in 1562/3. No record has been traced of John Rudge the dyer as a freeman though he also used the alias Comyng. He was churchwarden of St Mary Steps in 1556/7 and 1557/8.

warden were identified from these records.<sup>418</sup> Seven paid the mid-century lay subsidies with assessments varying from £2 to £13 6s 8d and eight were city freemen. They were strongly linked with the West Quarter of the city, where seven of them lived (three in St Mary Steps). They were men on the edges of city government. One became a city bailiff in 1562. Five served as wardens of Exe Bridge, four as churchwardens and two took on apprentices who became freemen. The city's guilds were therefore, led by men who were relatively prosperous and on the outer edges of the city government but prominent in their parishes, with a probable concentration in the western quarter of the city.

The minor guilds listed in the corn accounts are now examined in turn, before considering groups whose existence may have been more fleeting.

### *The Bakers' Guild.*

The bakers were the third most prosperous city guild in 1562 but no collection of guild records survives. Exeter's Tudor bakers have been recently studied as an occupation by Osborne but little is known of their guild.<sup>419</sup> Hooker states that a guild existed in 1428 and that they were incorporated in 1483. There are also suggestions that they were incorporated in 1464 and 1487/88. They were included in the Midsummer watches in 1549, 1561 and 1563.<sup>420</sup> Our main evidence is, however, their ordinances which were confirmed by the city government in 1483.<sup>421</sup> The ordinances may not have been their first ones as they make reference to some regulations 'as of old be ordred'. The bakers were named as the Fraternity of Our Lady and St Clement but there is no direct evidence of its existence at the time of the Reformation. The annual feast of the Nativity of Our Blessed Lady was, according to the 1483 ordinances, to be held in St Nicholas Priory or a local parish church. The major dates in the guild's

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<sup>418</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185 nos.22 and also 6 and 10. William Lant, master of the tailors, Ambrose Howell and Simon Jane of the weavers, tuckers and shearers, James Taylor of the bakers, William Mylford of the cappers, Richard Wylls of the brewers, John Rudge of the dyers, Nicholas Benson of the cordwainers and William Shepherd warden of the cordwainers.

<sup>419</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp.188-203 analyses them as an occupation.

<sup>420</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 ff. 303a, 321a; AB II f.103b, AB III f.104, AB IV f.117; Osborne (p.188) notes that they were incorporated in 1464 and re-incorporated in 1487/88. MacCaffrey, *Exeter* p.87 gives the date of incorporation as 2 Edward IV and 3 Henry VII. Kowaleski notes the bakers' dispute in 1428 but states that there is no formal record of them until their ordinances in 1483: *Local Markets*, p.100.

<sup>421</sup> They were printed in Toulmin Smith, *English Guilds* pp. 333-337 and can be found in DHC, ECA, MCR 22 Edward IV/I Richard III.



calendar were: the election day, the feast day, the general obit and dirge held for the deceased members of the fraternity, and the day of audit. There is mention of the welfare and prosperity of the 'susterne' as well as the 'brothern' and these may have been the bakers' wives. No collection of the guild's deeds survives for this time.<sup>422</sup>

The 1483 ordinances show most concern with their social functions, which are considered first, but their government and economic functions were also covered.<sup>423</sup> They appointed two masters and two wardens annually. Their powers of search were enforced only with the aid of the city authorities and the fines levied by the guild were divided with the mayor and council. Offenders were also to be brought before the city court. The Exeter city council exercised close control over them, as they did other guilds. This was the case for bakers' guilds in other towns such as Bristol.<sup>424</sup> Economically the bakers were concerned with controlling those who worked in the occupation in the city, 'slocking' (apprentices moving to another master) and ensuring that bakers were 'habelyd' (abled) to ensure their competence in the craft. The ordinances stressed attendance at meetings and feast days, Regular assembly of guild members was an important feature of guild membership, emphasised by Rosser.<sup>425</sup>

Our knowledge of the guild's officialdom is slender. Only two masters were identified: Nicholas Gunstone in 1563 and Nicholas Eron in 1567.<sup>426</sup> Eron became a freeman in 1557 and was fairly prosperous being assessed on £8 and £12 worth of goods in St John's in 1577 and 1586. He may have been an alien.<sup>427</sup> He was involved in overseas trading in 1562 when he was fined by the

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<sup>422</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.73. They held land worth 20s in All Hallows on the Walls in 1593.

<sup>423</sup> The ordering of the ordinances is different from the near contemporary ones for the Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen (1481) and the Cordwainers (1482) which are discussed below.

<sup>424</sup> Fleming, *Time, Space and Power*,

p.424.<http://uwerepository.worktribe.com/OutputFile/924989>

<sup>425</sup> G. Rosser, 'Communities of Parish and Guild in the Later Middle Ages' in S.J. Wright ed., *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750*, London, 1988, p.34. G. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250-1550*, Oxford, 2015, pp.203-227.

<sup>426</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', p.192 notes Gunstone's date of office. Eron is noted as master in DHC, ECA, AB III f.204.

<sup>427</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.82 where he is called Aron; *Tudor Exeter* pp.63,68 shows that he had apprentices entering the Exeter freedom in 1584, 1589 and 1592. Osborne, from his name, thinks that he may have been an alien: 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp.193-194.

Merchants' Company for importing linen from St Malo. This may have been for wrapping for his bread.<sup>428</sup>

### *The Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen*

The next highest ranked guild in 1562 was the weavers, tuckers and shearmen. The guild was also the fraternity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1471 it received a grant of land in St John and by 1479 it had built a chapel on the site.<sup>429</sup> The 1483 ordinances mention their chapel 'sett in the Hye Strete nye the Towne'.<sup>430</sup> The fraternity continued until the Edwardian dissolutions when the chapel was confusingly stated by the chantry surveyors to be a chantry of St Mary Arches church rather than the guild chapel of St Mary. The chapel, however, survived the Crown's rapacity to continue in the secular guise of the Tuckers' Hall.<sup>431</sup>

An early set of guild ordinances survives for 1483, though these might not be the first ones they possessed.<sup>432</sup> They have many similarities with the bakers' ordinances in their economic and governmental regulations. In the reign of Edward VI a petition concerning them was also submitted to the mayor which contained 13 ordinances. The content and ordering of both is broadly similar.<sup>433</sup> This guild was subservient to the city oligarchy as symbolised on the election day, when the newly appointed master of the guild processed to the city Guildhall where he took his oath. More is known of its membership than other guilds. In 1565 it had 96 members and may have been the largest craft guild in Exeter.<sup>434</sup> From other records 14 members were identified as weavers, seven as tuckers, two as shearmen and one as a clothier. They included one woman member, 'wydow Gatter', but no more has been discovered about her. It seems

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<sup>428</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11f.13a; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.173.

<sup>429</sup> Youings, *Tuckers Hall* pp.15-17.

<sup>430</sup> J.Youings, 'Tuckers Hall, Exeter; Some Early Gild Ordinances,' *DCNQ*, 31:8, 1970, pp.253-258.

<sup>431</sup> Youings, *Tuckers Hall*, p.19.

<sup>432</sup> Youings, 'Tuckers Hall'. They were discovered enrolled in the Mayor's Court Roll for 1489 in 1971, after the publication of *Tuckers Hall*.

<sup>433</sup> DHC, ECA, ED/M/1052. The later ones contain references to the chapel and the feast rather than to a fraternity, provision for livery for the guild officials and a payment of quarterage had been established towards guild costs and charges.

<sup>434</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/5/1, accessed on [www.tuckershall.org.uk/incorporation/books](http://www.tuckershall.org.uk/incorporation/books); Youings, *Tuckers Hall*, pp.25-27. We cannot be certain that it is the largest due to the lack of survival of the records of many guilds. It is the largest membership we have from any of the surviving guild membership lists for the period studied.

likely that she was a textile worker as she appeared in the membership list. The guild ordinances also expressed concern with the 'sistren'.<sup>435</sup> Ten senior members were identified as 'Mr.' in the 1565 membership list.<sup>436</sup>

In total the names of 32 guild officials from the years 1471 to 1570 have been identified from the original documents and the research conducted by Youings and Cresswell.<sup>437</sup> The two feoffees identified by Youings have not been included as there is no clear evidence that they were guild members, though they were both certainly very closely associated with it.<sup>438</sup> Thirteen of these officials were identified as weavers and ten as tuckers with five shearmen and four not having a known occupation. This indicates that the guild was not dominated by any one craft group. Youings noted that the guild officials were 'comfortably off but not to be compared in wealth with the merchants' and notes that they were mostly assessed in the subsidies at between £5 and £20.<sup>439</sup> The current research suggests that the officials were assessed at a little lower than this, at between £1 and £20, though the lower figures may represent earlier points in their careers. The most frequent assessments were on goods worth £1, £3 and £6. They resided widely in eleven city parishes though the largest group were in St John (6) followed by St Mary Major.(4) A number (7) served as churchwardens in St John, furthering the evidence of the links between that parish and the guild. If we discount the feoffees then they did not attain positions within the city elite, though two men became wardens of Exe Bridge and one may have become a bailiff.<sup>440</sup> The Exeter craft guilds do not generally seem to have inspired many testamentary bequests from their members with only eight found in the surviving wills across all guilds. However, of these, three

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<sup>435</sup> Youings, 'Tuckers Hall', p.235.

<sup>436</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/5/1. [www.tuckershall.org.uk/incorporation/books](http://www.tuckershall.org.uk/incorporation/books).

<sup>437</sup> Youings, *Tuckers Hall*, pp.1-25; B.F. Cresswell, *A Short History of the Worshipful Company of Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen of the City and County of Exeter*, Exeter, 1930.

<sup>438</sup> Henry Hamlyn, mayor of Exeter in 1526 and 1538 and Roger Luxton, who was a shearmen and was city bailiff in 1524. Hamlyn was assessed in the subsidies on goods as highly-valued as £200 and Luxton on £110. Youings, *Tuckers Hall*, pp.17-18 discusses the officials.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>440</sup> Richard Taylor became warden of Exe Bridge in 1561 and John Kychell in 1567. John Lane may have been the man who became a city bailiff in 1536 but the name is a common one. Problems of identification are best illustrated by John Tucker. There is reference to a weaver, merchant, tailor, cordwainer and brewer of that name.

were made to the weavers, tuckers and shearmen in 1504, 1514 and 1525. The other bequests were all to the merchants and the tailors.<sup>441</sup>

Although the weavers played an important part in the struggle against the merchants in 1558/59 they did not have great civic power. They appear to have been concerned with managing their landed property, which was valued at more than any of the other minor guilds but at less than half the value of that of the tailors. By the mid-sixteenth century the guild had an annual income of about £6 from rents. It also took sums from its tenants for the renewal of leases. The guild prospered as the cloth industry underwent the beginnings of a resurgence in Elizabethan Exeter and this became even more pronounced as the merchant fullers emerged in the next century.<sup>442</sup> The dyers, who never had a formal guild at this time banded together when their interests were threatened by the merchants' charter in 1558/59 but no clear evidence has been found of dyers being members of the weavers' guild, or being amalgamated with any other occupational group.<sup>443</sup>

### *The Cordwainers' Guild*

The cordwainers were the next ranked guild in 1562. The guild was re-incorporated by the city in 1481 when the Mayor's Court roll includes their ordinances.<sup>444</sup> By the 1480s the members were bound together as the Fraternity of the Blessed Trinity. From before 1481 they were maintaining a priest and a chapel. All the members were expected to contribute towards these and could be fined 40s if they refused to do so.<sup>445</sup> They had a guild chapel which was connected with the parish church of St Lawrence but was a short distance away, probably just off the High Street. It was rented from the Dean and Chapter.<sup>446</sup> They held their meetings in the chapel, like the weavers. The

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<sup>441</sup> In 1504 Nicholas Hamlyn bequeathed 3s 4d to the Chapel of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary in St John's parish; in 1514 John Chalmore left 20d to the chapel of Our Lady 'longing to the wevers' and in 1525 John Whiddon left an annuity of 6s 8d to the Fraternity of the Assumption. TNA, PCC, Prob 11/14/21, Prob 11/18/5; DHC, ECA, 58/7/4/4/7.

<sup>442</sup> M. Yoneyama, *The Decline of Guilds and their Monopoly in English Provincial Towns with Particular Reference to Exeter*, *Urban History*, 46:3, 2018, pp.1-21 provides a detailed case study of the Exeter Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen's guild in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

<sup>443</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185 nos. 6 and 22.

<sup>444</sup> Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, pp.331-334.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p.333.

<sup>446</sup> TNA, E301/15 f.10.

wardens of the Fraternity of the Holy Trinity held lands worth £2 in St Lawrence parish in 1544.<sup>447</sup>

Every year on the Monday following the mayoral election the master and wardens of the guild came to the city Guildhall and surrendered all their powers, which were then re-granted to them on payment of a fine of 4d.<sup>448</sup> At a time when the tailors were seeking direct confirmation of their status from the King, the contrast with the cordwainers is apparent. The guild did not have great civic influence and was subservient to the city council.<sup>449</sup> As with the other guilds the city council received half of all the fines levied by them. This continued for half a century until 1531 when the cordwainers sent a petition to the King asking for confirmation of their ordinances and that they may henceforth be known as the 'fellowship of the cordwainers.'<sup>450</sup> This attempt to gain corporate status from the Crown was not successful as no reply made by Henry VIII is known but it is real evidence of some attempt to assert their status and escape from this subservience. The government of the cordwainers' guild changed little between 1481 and 1531. It was controlled by a master, two shopholder wardens and two journeymen wardens.<sup>451</sup> There was a guild of shopholders and a journeymen's guild, effectively two sub-guilds, though we have no more details of the latter. The shopholders were the master craftsmen.

Their economic regulations allowed the guild to supervise the tanning, currying, cutting and sewing of leather.<sup>452</sup> The cordwainers asserted control over masters, waged workers and apprentices in line with the other guilds. In Exeter there were disputes between the cordwainers and the tanners as the former had the right, under the ordinances of 1481, to search 'wete lethere' and 'drye botez, botwez, schoez'.<sup>453</sup>

Eight guild officials have been traced in the sixteenth century of whom three were masters, four wardens and the office held by one is not known. Seven

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<sup>447</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.52.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, p.334; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.113.

<sup>449</sup> Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.55.

<sup>450</sup> TNA SP1/237; *Letters and Papers Henry VIII*, Addenda no.757.

<sup>451</sup> Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.331.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, p.332. There were many disputes between tanners and cordwainers: see Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.54-57.

<sup>453</sup> Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, pp.331-334.

were identified as city freemen. They lived in six parishes across the city and their wealth varied considerably. Their subsidy assessments ranged from £1 to £15, £18 and £40. Most cannot be connected with civic office holding though one, Hugh Pope, rose to become city receiver. Two were wardens of Exe Bridge. Others were successful men such as Walter Gaydon who took on three apprentices who entered the freedom and held land in Frierenhay in the city and further afield in the parish of Spreyton (8 miles north east of Okehampton). Matthew Fleet was recorded as being a Dutchman in 1522 and both he and Walter Howell paid shop fines, the latter for five years between 1514 and 1518.<sup>454</sup> The leadership of the cordwainers' guild was very varied but some of their members had high standing.

The guild held more landed property than has previously been recognised. Between 1496 and 1505 they held two tenements in the north part of the West Gate, in All Hallows on the Walls, from the city council.<sup>455</sup> In 1522 they were assessed on 13s 4d worth of lands in St Paul and in the early 1530s they were involved in a dispute concerning 12 acres of arable land and 2 acres of pasture in St Thomas, just outside the West Gate.<sup>456</sup> They were also assessed on lands worth 40s in St. Lawrence in 1544.<sup>457</sup> The Blessed Trinity fraternity was a victim of the Edwardian dissolutions. Their property was transferred to the Court of Augmentations in 1548 and a list drawn up for that court survives, as shown below.<sup>458</sup>

**TABLE 3.16 THE PROPERTY OF THE CORDWAINERS' GUILD IN 1548**

LOCATION	GUILD HOLDINGS 1548
St Paul's, city of Exeter	two stables and a garden

<sup>454</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.37; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.13,15,16,23,37,40,42,48,54,58; *Exeter Freemen*, pp.66,68,69,71,72,77,84; *Letter and Papers of Henry VIII*, Vol. 5 no.220; TNA C1/631/4, C1/815/18; DHC, ECA, Orphans Court Inventory no.12; DHC, ECA, ED/M/1035; DHC, ECA, AB I f.176a,160a, 171b,169a,167b, 192a, ABIII f.162.

<sup>455</sup> Reece Index. DHC, ECA, 11/12, 15/16, 19/20 Henry VII show them being held by the 'fraternitas sutorum'.

<sup>456</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.14; TNA C/631/4.

<sup>457</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.52.

<sup>458</sup> TNA SC6/116-120; Rose-Troup, 'Kalendars' pp.417-419; L.S. Snell ed., *The Chantry Certificates for Devon and the City of Exeter*, Exeter, 1960, p.12; N. Orme, 'The Dissolution of the Chantries in Devon', *TDA*, 111, 1979, pp.94, 107.

St Mary Arches, city of Exeter	two tenements
St David's near Exeter	a tenement
Manor of Hayes (near Alphington, 1 ¾ miles south of Exeter,)	two closes of land
Sourton,(4 miles south west of Okehampton)	a tenement and a close of land

(Source: TNA SC6/116-120)

The cordwainers' guild survived the loss of its fraternity and according to Hooker was re-incorporated in 1555.<sup>459</sup> It was providing men for the Midsummer muster in the mid-sixteenth century and received a further new charter in the 1580s.<sup>460</sup>

### *The Smiths' and Cutlers' Guild*

The cutlers were recorded as contributors to the corn purchases in 1562 though they formed part of an amalgamated guild in Exeter. Conglomerations of guilds occurred in towns throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and may have been a response to economic recession, as seems to have been the case in late-fifteenth century York. This seems a less likely reason for their formation in Exeter.<sup>461</sup> In 1560 a number of the smaller crafts were amalgamated as the 'armerers of the citie'.<sup>462</sup> This included blacksmiths, cutlers, farriers, lockyers, armourers, bitmakers or lorimers, spurriers and saddlers. The guild became commonly known as the 'Smiths and Cutlers' and paid 66s 8d to the city council for its incorporation. Civic interest in this guild may have been driven by concern over the control of weaponry under the new Protestant regime. Four men were named as sureties for the guild. Richard Mogridge represented the cutlers, Richard Keyser the smiths and Thomas Bapcombe the saddlers with William Knollys also listed. Two year later John Byrde, who was then master of the guild, and Richard Mogridge gave sureties to the Twenty Four not to sell

<sup>459</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.351a.

<sup>460</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter* p.87; Harte et al., *Description*, p.825.

<sup>461</sup> J. Kermode, 'The Greater Towns' in Palliser, *Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 1, 600-1540*, pp.441-466.

<sup>462</sup> DHC, ECA, ABIII f.146.

weapons contrary to the Queen's proclamation issued in that year.<sup>463</sup> Most were traced as city freemen but they were less wealthy craftsmen as the highest lay subsidy assessment recorded was £5. One, Thomas Bapcombe, served as a churchwarden in Holy Trinity but none took on any civic office.<sup>464</sup> The amalgamation appears to have been a profitable one and does not suggest any decline in this area of the city's economy. Earlier references to guild activity amongst these craft groups is very limited though Exeter smiths were electing wardens for their craft in the early fifteenth century which indicates some form of craft organisation.<sup>465</sup> No records survive for this guild.

### *The Glovers' Guild*

The glovers were the last guild listed in 1562. The craft became more prominent amongst leather workers in the Elizabethan era. In 1556 the Twenty Four agreed that the glovers should be incorporated and in 1560 the grant was made, for which they paid £5 13s 4d.<sup>466</sup> The guild contained whitawers and fryers (perhaps furriers) and possibly also the skinners. Four men entered as sureties for the guild and all of them were freemen, two entering as glovers, though John Bentlowe was also likely to have worked as a furrier. They are not well recorded in the lay subsidy returns but the data available suggests that they were less wealthy craftsmen assessed on between £1 and £5. Martin Barbanson, living in St Kerrian, had the highest known assessment. He was an alien who employed a servant.<sup>467</sup>

### *Other Guilds*

Other guilds, which were not recorded in 1562, clearly existed. Apart from the tailors the other Exeter clothing trades had far more spasmodic guilds. The cappers were, according to Hooker, incorporated by the city in 1494 but an

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<sup>463</sup> DHC,ECA, AB IV f.177; P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin ed. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, New Haven, 1964, Vol. 2, pp.197-200.

<sup>464</sup> DHC, ECA, Holy Trinity PW4., Richard Keyser took up leases from the city and bought iron from the city council DHC, ECA, AB II ff. 105b, 131a,162b.

<sup>465</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.100.

<sup>466</sup> DHC, ECA, AB II, f.145b, AB III, f.45.

<sup>467</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.52, 58; *Exeter Freeman*, pp.80,84, 89: DHC,ECA,ABIII f.45 records when Barbanson was a surety for the glovers' charter in 1560. His servant, John Gilberte, was also an alien.



independent guild had lapsed by the sixteenth century.<sup>468</sup> It does not appear in the musters of 1549 and 1561. By Elizabeth's reign the closely allied trades of haberdashers and feltmakers were rising to a new prominence. In 1563 the cappers 'of the name of haberdashers' paid five marks (£3.34) for an incorporation by the city.<sup>469</sup> Amalgamations of these occupations were common and have also been noted in Bristol, Kendal and Ripon.<sup>470</sup> Little is known of the guild although in 1885 Rowsell noted a house at the corner of North Street which he suggested was their former meeting place.<sup>471</sup>

There was some guild organisation amongst the other leather crafts. Hooker tells us that the skimmers' guild was re-incorporated in 1482 and they may have been incorporated as early as 1462.<sup>472</sup> In the fifteenth century the skimmers were acting together as the Fraternity of Corpus Christi and were responsible for some part of Exeter's celebration of that festival. A Corpus Christi play was performed by the Skimmers' Company in 1494.<sup>473</sup> The guild underwent a resurgence and were listed as an existing guild in the 1561 Midsummer muster and received a new charter in the 1580s.<sup>474</sup>

The building crafts in Exeter did not possess any guild structure until Elizabeth's reign. Even then it is only the helliers who were initially involved, as they amalgamated with the coopers, and were incorporated in 1566, paying £3 for the privilege.<sup>475</sup> There is little reference to coopers as a trade, which is unusual in a port city. It may be that more coopers were living and working at Topsham. In 1586 a further incorporation was granted by Exeter's council to the painters, carpenters, joiners, masons and glaziers. They became known as the 'Painters

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<sup>468</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.327a.

<sup>469</sup> DHC, ECA, ABIII f.114.

<sup>470</sup> Kramer, *English Craft Guilds*, p.6. There was a guild of cappers, haberdashers and feltmakers in Exeter in 1638.

<sup>471</sup> P.F. Rowsell, 'The Ancient Companies of the City of Exeter,' *Western Antiquary*, 4, 1885, p.188.

<sup>472</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51, f.321a; Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.100.

<sup>473</sup> Lloyd Parry, *History*, pp. 64-65; J. Wasson, ed., 'Devon', *Records of Early English Drama*, Toronto, 1986, pp.82-83, 106-110, 357-58; Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.100; C. Radford, 'Three Centuries of Playgoing in Exeter', *TDA*, 82, 1950, pp.241-242.

<sup>474</sup> DHC, ECA, AB III, f.424; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.87.

<sup>475</sup> DHC, ECA, AB III, f.187.

and Carpenters'.<sup>476</sup> Large unions of crafts within guilds were common in the building trades elsewhere.<sup>477</sup>

The bakers were the most prominent guild within the food and drinks trades but others existed. A brewers' guild is mentioned in 1549 participating in the Midsummer watch and in 1559 in the Merchants' Company dispute papers.<sup>478</sup> It did not receive its first incorporation until 1579.<sup>479</sup> Wardens were appointed for Exeter's 'Fleshfold' or meat market in the late fourteenth century but there is no other reference to any butchers' guild in the late fifteenth or earlier sixteenth centuries. The butchers were listed amongst the guilds providing men for the 1561 Midsummer muster.<sup>480</sup> They obtained grants of incorporation in 1562 and 1566, paying in both years.<sup>481</sup> The butchers' charter of 1566 was issued with the proviso that it could be revoked within one year and this practice was extended in the re-grant in 1575.<sup>482</sup>

Hooker states that a barber surgeons' guild was incorporated in Exeter in 1487 and they were noted also in 1579 but no other record of their existence has been located.<sup>483</sup> Guilds of barber-surgeons were commonly small corporations in the English towns.<sup>484</sup>

The finer metal crafts had no organised guilds in Exeter in the sixteenth century. The London Goldsmiths' Company by letters patent granted in 1462, and confirmed in 1505, was granted national rights of search in the craft which precluded any provincial towns from setting up goldsmiths' guilds.<sup>485</sup> This right was enforced by regular summer tours made by the wardens of the London

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<sup>476</sup> DHC, ECA, ED/M/1259, AB IV f.488.

<sup>477</sup> Kramer, *English Craft Gilds*, p.79.

<sup>478</sup> DHC, ECA, AB II f.103b; Book 185 nos. 6 and 22.

<sup>479</sup> DHC, ECA, AB III f.42; *Exeter Freeman*, p. xxv; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.87.

<sup>480</sup> DHC, ECA, AB IV f.117.

<sup>481</sup> DHC, ECA, AB III f.187 (1566), AB IV f.172 (1562). In April 1562 the butchers paid £6 13s 4d' to have a corporation upon certain articles to be agreed by the Twenty Four' and in October 1566 they paid £5 unless it was proved not to be beneficial to the commonwealth.

<sup>482</sup> DHC, ECA AB III f.187; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.88 comments on the 1575 re-grant as evidence of control by the city government.

<sup>483</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.323b; Book 52 f.511; Rose Troup, 'Kalenders', p.428; M. Pelling, 'Barber-Surgeons' Guilds and Ordinances in Early Modern British Towns - the Story so Far.' pp.27-28, Medical Practitioners Project Working Paper 1 [www.http://practitioners.exeter.ac.uk](http://practitioners.exeter.ac.uk).

<sup>484</sup> Kramer, *English Craft Gilds*, pp.18, 79.

<sup>485</sup> T.F. Reddaway, 'The London Goldsmiths' c.1500,' *TRHS*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 12, 1962, p.51.

Company who imposed fines on the provincial goldsmiths to ensure observation of their ordinances. The book containing payments made by the provincial craftsmen has been lost, though we do know that in 1507 they paid over £51. It seems reasonable to assume that Exeter men paid in that year as John Bulwick, a Plymouth goldsmith, certainly paid 2s.<sup>486</sup> The London wardens were in the West in 1534, 1535 and 1537, going as far as St Michael's Mount, so they may have levied fines in Exeter then, though no records are known to survive.<sup>487</sup> Exeter had no incorporated goldsmiths' guild until 1700.<sup>488</sup>

Other citizens who worked in occupations where there were no guilds may have banded together at times. There is evidence of this in 1561 when the Midsummer watch included 'the company sent to Mr mair of the citizens being of no companies'.<sup>489</sup> No system is known to have operated in Exeter like the one in York where the smaller guilds were allowed to use St Anthony's Hall for their meetings<sup>490</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Exeter, with at most 12 guilds, had far fewer than in York, where there were as many as 51 in 1485 and perhaps 64 by 1579.<sup>491</sup> The number in Exeter was similar to much smaller Worcester where Dyer notes that there were 12 in 1577. In that city there were a large number of crafts which had no guilds and some had just six members. In Exeter in 1561, as stated above, there is an indication that men in occupations with no guilds wanted them though it may have been that those who were not in a guild were just treated as a further company.<sup>492</sup>

In their role as religious fraternities a number of the Exeter guilds had strong associations in the pre-Reformation period. We have less evidence of their role

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<sup>486</sup> T.F. Reddaway and L.E.M. Walker, ed. *The Early History of the London Goldsmiths Company 1327-1509*, London, 1975, p.196.

<sup>487</sup> Reddaway, 'London Goldsmiths', p. 62.

<sup>488</sup> Chanter, 'Exeter Goldsmiths' Guild, pp.438-479.

<sup>489</sup> DHC, ECA, AB IV f.117.

<sup>490</sup> D.M.Palliser, 'The Trade Guilds of Tudor York' in Clark and Slack, ed., *Crisis and Order*, pp.90, 96.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, p.89. Palliser states that 'This is a remarkably large number, though by no means incredible in the light of figures from cities of a comparable size'.

<sup>492</sup> Dyer, *City of Worcester*, pp. 149-150: the glovers' guild in Worcester had six members in 1577; DHC, ECA, AB IV f.117.

within pageants and drama than in some other cities and so this may have led to a minimising of their significance as social bodies coming together.<sup>493</sup>

Certainly half a dozen guilds had such continuous existence that they were able to maintain fraternities, some with their own chapel, before the Reformation and in some cases to maintain a guild hall later.

By the Elizabethan era the weavers probably had the largest guild in Exeter with ninety to a hundred members, more than the merchants and the tailors which each had sixty to seventy members. The listings of guilds studied here suggest that the bakers and the cordwainers were both of importance in the city, though we have no membership lists, but as their records have not survived it is impossible to verify this in any detail. In terms of the value of their property holdings, however, the weavers held less than half of that of the tailors, with that of the cordwainers valued just below them. Guild membership was most common in the leather, textile and clothing occupations. Amalgamations and conglomerations did occur, notably in the metal, building and cloth working crafts, and primarily in the early Elizabethan period, but in Exeter these do not seem to have been, as Kramer believed, symptomatic of the decline of the guilds. Guild leaders in Exeter were sometimes assessed in subsidies at the level seen by Cornwall as 'highly skilled craftsman' but frequently they were from the ranks of those he termed 'lesser skilled craftsmen' which suggests they had less economic power.<sup>494</sup> Although some were leaders in their parishes, as churchwardens, few took up positions within the outer elite and very few attained high civic office. A journeymen guild certainly existed for the cordwainers as well as for the tailors, but our knowledge of both is limited.

It is clear that throughout the period all the guilds were under the control of the city council. However, they were significant economic and social agencies in Exeter. They were more than just the artificially created bodies of city councils with a 'policing role as agents of the civic authorities' and 'agents of council policy' as argued by Swanson.<sup>495</sup> The guilds in early Tudor Exeter played an important communal and collective role as social and religious bodies, as

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<sup>493</sup> Rosser, *Art of Solidarity*, pp.202-211.

<sup>494</sup> Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, p.29.

<sup>495</sup> H. Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in the Late Medieval English Towns', *Past and Present*, 121, 1988, p.30; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.112.

Rosser argues they did in communities across the country.<sup>496</sup> Nevertheless this study of Exeter's minor guilds shows that, possibly excepting the cordwainers, they were tightly controlled by the city council making the opposition of the tailors' guild to that control in the late-fifteenth and the mid-sixteenth century even more remarkable.<sup>497</sup>

### 3.3 Artisans and Overseas Trade in Exeter 1470-1570

Exeter's artisans were of vital importance in the city's economy, were grouping more into guilds and also, in some cases, were becoming involved in the overseas trade of the city's port. The overseas and coastal trading of the merchants and the tailors is explored later in this study. However, men following other occupations were also involved in trading and this section examines this to establish how widespread and important it was. The customs accounts were studied using three approaches. Firstly the customs accounts for the years where both national Particulars of Custom and local Exeter Town Customs are both extant were analysed.<sup>498</sup> Secondly, the 'certificate books,' which survive for Exeter for the mid sixteenth century, were examined.<sup>499</sup> Finally the Exeter Port Books for both overseas and coastal trade for the years from 1565 to 1570, which give the most certain view of who was involved, together with the Town Customs accounts from the years between 1560 and 1567 were consulted.<sup>500</sup> These sources provide insight into who was trading in the early 1470s, the early 1490s and the 1500s and then again in the early 1540s, the mid-1550s and finally the later 1560s.

Kowaleski concluded that the import trade in late-fourteenth century Exeter, though merchant dominated, was conducted by a variety of occupational groups. These included smiths, dyers, furriers and skimmers and also a taverner, a shoemaker, a pewterer, a glazier and a bowyer. She contended that

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<sup>496</sup> G. Rosser, 'Big Brotherhood: Guilds in Urban Politics in Late Medieval England', in I.A. Gadd and P. Wallis ed., *Guilds and Associations in Europe 900-1900*, London, 2006; Rosser, *Art of Solidarity*, pp.204-206.

<sup>497</sup> See 4.2.

<sup>498</sup> See 1.3.

<sup>499</sup> TNA E122/45/1, 45/2,45/5,45/9,45/10,45/11, 46/1.

<sup>500</sup> TNA, E190/925/6, 925/7, 925/14, 926/1, 926/9, 927/3, 927/7, 927/13.

craftsmen who became involved in the trade were usually bringing into Exeter the raw materials of their trade although wine was the commodity that a range of traders was most likely to become involved in shipping into the port. In the years from 1381 to 1391 she calculated that almost half of the Exeter importers were merchants but about 29% were artisans, 11% innholders and taverners, 7% clergy servicing their households and about 4% professionals such as lawyers. The export trade, however, was more dominated by the merchants.<sup>501</sup> MacCaffrey, drawing upon sources connected with trade from the period after 1565, notes that by that time 'the large role played by the bigger merchants is immediately apparent....Nevertheless, there was still room for a sizable number of smaller dealers'. However, these 'smaller dealers' were also merchants as they were 'from within the circle of the company', that is the Exeter Merchants' Company.<sup>502</sup> Swanson researched the role of the artisans of York and also examined the Hull customs accounts edited by Childs. She concluded that 'on the very rare occasions when artisans do appear in these records the goods they imported were limited in quantity and usually specific to their own craft'. She examined the role of dyers and bowyers, seeing the York dyers as 'quasi-mercantile', but that their imports were mainly restricted to wine, dyes and fish. Bowyers imported yew staves.<sup>503</sup>

**TABLE 3.17 THE INVOLVEMENT OF EXETER OCCUPATIONS IN THE OVERSEAS AND COASTAL TRADE OF THE PORT OF EXETER 1470-1568: THE EVIDENCE OF PARALLEL NATIONAL AND TOWN CUSTOMS ACCOUNTS**

OCCUPATION	1470/71	1492/93	1502/3	1543/4	1557/8	1567/8
<b>DISTRIBUTIVE</b>						
MERCHANT	6	7	14	29	19	47
DRAPER	1					1
MERCER	3	3	4			
CHANDLER			1	1	1	1
VINTNER						1
<b>CLOTHING</b>						
TAILOR	10	8	2		1	
HOSIER	1					
<b>TEXTILE</b>						
DYER	1	2				
FULLER	1					
WEAVER					2	2
<b>LEATHER</b>						

<sup>501</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.250.

<sup>502</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.170-171.

<sup>503</sup> Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.132.

SHOEMAKER				1		
CORDWAINER		1	1		1	
COBBLER				1		
SADDLER	1	1				
SKINNER	1	1			1	1
TANNER		1	1			
<b>METAL</b>						
GOLDSMITH	1					
BELLFOUNDER	1	1				
LOCKSMITH	1					
<b>WOOD</b>						
BOWYER		1	1			
CARVER				1		
JOINER				1		
<b>FOOD &amp; DRINK</b>						
BUTCHER	1	2				
BAKER		2			1	
FISHER	1					
<b>PROFESSIONAL</b>						
BARBER	1					
SURGEON		1				
LAWYER	1	2				
GENTLEMAN				1		
CHURCH OFFICIAL				1		
KNOWN FREEMEN	21	30	11	11	5	3
TOTALS	54	63	35	47	31	56

(Sources: TNA E122/41/3, 41/4, 41/5a, 43/14, 43/15, 45/11b; E122/201/8; E190/926/11, DHC, ECA, TC 10/11 Edward IV, 8/9 Henry VII, 18/19 Henry VII, 34/35 Henry VIII, 35/36 Henry VIII, 4-5/5-6 Philip and Mary, 9/10 Elizabeth I; DHC, ECA, Book 57).

The table above gives the results of the analysis of the parallel customs accounts. In the earlier period a wider group was involved in the overseas and coastal trade. In 1470/1 a significant number have been identified with an occupational designation other than merchant or mercer. The number of tailors shows the importance of overseas trade for them at this time as argued in the next chapter.<sup>504</sup> However, there was also a wide group of men from 13 other trades. Some, such as the draper John Taylor, were importing a wide variety of goods which included crest cloth and canvas but also woad, salt and iron. Other traders such as the fisher John Thomas can only be identified importing the fish associated with his trade.<sup>505</sup>

During the boom in Exeter's trade at the end of the fifteenth century the information provided by the national and town customs accounts is very full. In 1492/3 there were still 14 trades represented in the records. Some prominent

<sup>504</sup> See 4.3 for a discussion of this.

<sup>505</sup> TNA E122/41/3, 41 /4; DHC, ECA, TC 10/11 Edward IV.

men such as the bellfounder Robert Russell, mayor in 1485/86, who imported wine, figs and herrings, were involved in general trading on a small scale.<sup>506</sup>

By 1502/3 the number of men involved in the trade had lessened noticeably. The information provided by both the national and the local customs officials was more systematic too as many more traders were given a specific town of connection by the national official in the customs entries. The local official also clearly states which men were freemen. It can be seen that traders who were designated as 'merchants' at the time were proportionately much more important. The merchants were beginning to take more control of the trade. However, the artisan traders were not just involved in bringing in goods associated with their own trades. The waxchandler John Gomby imported crest cloth, canvas fruit, iron, honey and oil in that year. William Crugge had moved from his background as a tanner into trading in tin and also imported iron.<sup>507</sup>

By the 1540s even more significant changes had occurred as there were far more men who were designated as merchants trading than those who were not. Only a few traders identified as Exeter freemen were not merchants. Some of them were linked with the wood and leather trades. The carver Godfrey Harman, and the cobbler Lewis Sage, were both aliens who had become involved in overseas trading. No significant category of men from other trades is evident.<sup>508</sup>

There was no appreciable change by 1557/58. The total numbers of identifiable Exeter men had fallen overall but those who were clearly identified as Exeter merchants vastly predominated. The few Exeter freemen trading who came from different crafts included weavers who can be identified trading in 1567/8. None of them appear to have been guild officials though John Ketchell did become warden of Exe Bridge in 1567. He had paid a very large entry fine of £4 for the city freedom in 1557 so must have been of some means and probably a migrant to the city. He was recorded as trading in that year and ten years later. He was assessed in the subsidy on goods worth £6 in St Martin's parish in 1557 and also had an apprentice who took up the freedom as a weaver in 1573/4 so

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<sup>506</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 8/9 Henry VII.

<sup>507</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 18/19 Henry VII; John Gomby alias Wymond Austyn.

<sup>508</sup> TNA E122/43/14; DHC, ECA, TC 34/35 Henry VIII.



he must have had an established weaving business. He imported cloth but also wine and raisins in other shipments. Some of these were part of the same cargoes as established Exeter merchants, suggesting that he was an accepted trader.<sup>509</sup>

The 'Certificate Books' which survive for Exeter for the years from 1552 to 1557 confirm that the great Exeter merchants of the day were involved in all aspects of the trade. The entries suggest that fewer traders were controlling Exeter's commerce by this date. However, as no specific town of residence is included in them, or a note of where the freedom was held, they are less valuable in helping to trace the artisans who may have been involved in trading. The impression given by them is that there were very few indeed.

The parallel customs accounts for 1567/68 record the situation after the setting up of the Exeter Merchants' Company and so we would expect that those Exeter men noted as trading through the port would all have been merchants. This was overwhelmingly the case but there were still a handful of non-merchant Exeter traders recorded. These included John Pyll who is primarily referred to as a draper and, despite resistance to becoming one, was by this time a member of the Merchant Adventurers' Company. There were also men following a range of other occupations: two weavers, a vintner, waxchandler, skinner and an ecclesiastical official. From the overseas Port Book in 1569 we also know that George Reve, an Exeter brewer, was sending unspecified goods to La Rochelle.<sup>510</sup>

The surviving coastal Port Books for the period from 1565 to 1570 have been used to give some idea as to what extent this branch of the trade was dominated by the merchants or if the artisans were still involved.<sup>511</sup> Exeter artisans were involved in the coastal trade, but only to a small extent. Richard Taylor was a tucker who became master of his guild in 1560, though he was also a clothier and was shipping goods to London.<sup>512</sup> William Grenewode, a

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<sup>509</sup> TNA E122/45/11B, 926/1; DHC,ECA, TC 1557/58, 1567/68; *Tudor Exeter*, p.57; *Exeter Freeman*, pp.81,91; DHA, ECA, Exe Bridge Wardens' Accounts 9/10 Eliz. I.

<sup>510</sup> TNA,E190/926/9.

<sup>511</sup> See 1.3.

<sup>512</sup> TNA, E190/925/14. See also 5.6 on Taylor as a clothier.

cook, was a freeman of some social standing, serving as warden of Exe Bridge in 1562/63. In 1569 he brought in an unspecified cargo from Fowey in the 'John' of Fowey. Grenwode is clearly stated to be an Exeter citizen and no other man of that name was traced there at that time.<sup>513</sup> The Town Customs accounts for the years from 1560 to 1567 provide some more evidence of artisans importing goods. They include goods being brought in to the port in 1561 for Richard Lymbeare's shop. He was a barber and in partnership with a mercer imported cards, twine, paper and brushes.<sup>514</sup> The weaver John Kechell brought in crest cloth and tregar<sup>515</sup> in 1561 and 3 tons of raisins on one ship and 3 tons of raisins and 2 tons seck wine on another ship in 1567.<sup>516</sup> The smiths Martin Philypes and Richard Keyser and Michael Smote, a spurrier, all designated as Exeter freemen, brought in coals during these years.<sup>517</sup>

Over the period as a whole the names of the artisan traders in the parallel customs accounts were linked with civic office holding. Two mayors, one receiver and five bailiffs were recorded as traders. The mayors and receivers were trading in the late-fifteenth century but as the period progressed it was less likely that the traders would have been civic officials, or at the very most they attained the bailiffship. In the earlier period it seems probable from the extent of their trading that Robert Russell the bellfounder, elected mayor in 1485 and the saddler, Robert Newton, mayor in 1487 and 1503, were working as general merchants. At the end of the period the two known bailiffs, the chandler William Hunt and the draper John Pyll, were involved in the distributive trades and both subsequently became members of the Merchants' Company.

Exeter's trade came increasingly under the control of the merchants. In the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century tailors were important traders.<sup>518</sup> Prominent artisans within the city were also more likely to be involved in trading. During the sixteenth century just a few artisans managed to remain involved in

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<sup>513</sup> TNA, E190/926/9; *Exeter Freeman*, pp.81,93; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.61,69; DHC, ECA, Exe Bridge Wardens' Accounts 5/6, 6/7 Eliz. I.

<sup>514</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 1560/61.

<sup>515</sup> Or Treagar, a linen fabric from Treguier in Brittany: P.McGrath ed., *Merchants and Merchandise in Seventeenth-Century Bristol*, Bristol Record Society, 19, 1955, p.296.

<sup>516</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 1561/62, 1567/68.

<sup>517</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 1561/62, 1562/63, 1563/64, 1564/65.

<sup>518</sup> See 4.3.

overseas and coastal trading. Over the period as a whole, only leather workers participated in overseas trade in all of the years sampled and only weavers were represented by more than one man in any one year examined. Most artisans were not trading in goods connected solely with their own occupation. The range of artisan trader was less than that identified by Kowaleski in late-fourteenth century Exeter but greater than that suggested by Swanson for York and Hull. The Exeter Merchants' Company was not able to exercise a monopoly over trading even after 1558 and a few independent artisans continued to trade and especially to import goods, throughout the 1560s.<sup>519</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that a wide range of occupations were present in Exeter between 1470 and 1570. Given the incomplete nature of the list of Exeter freemen it is necessary to study a wide range of documents to reconstruct Exeter's occupational structure. Documentation of Exeter's guilds is also patchy, however, a dozen guilds including men from over 30 occupations have been shown to exist by the end of the period studied. Some men from a range of occupations participated in the import and coastal trades, particularly in the late fifteenth century. However, merchants and tailors were the dominant occupations and it is these two groups that are now examined in the remaining chapters.

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<sup>519</sup> See 6.6.

## CHAPTER 4: THE TAILORS IN EXETER 1470-1570

### 4.1 The Tailors' Craft

#### *Context*

The tailors were of considerable importance in the city of Exeter between 1470 and 1570. This chapter shows the success and prominence of Exeter's tailors compared to the position of the craft in most other towns. This can only really find a parallel in York. In the late fifteenth century they were at the centre of a small group of craftsmen who were becoming city freemen in larger numbers and in the sixteenth century they were, after the merchants, by far the second largest occupational group entering the freedom. In the reign of Henry VIII they also provided the second largest identified group of men paying shop fines in the city. The tailors were the second largest craft guild in Exeter and the Tailors' guild records show their vitality. In the earlier part of the period especially successful tailors became merchants and drapers. The tailors represented the only major threats to merchant dominance in the city but their challenges, made between 1461 and 1482 and 1558-1559 were rebuffed. By the 1560s it will be demonstrated that the tailors were playing a far less prominent political and economic role in the city.

No detailed study has been undertaken of the Exeter tailors. Toulmin Smith published some of their records in a study of English guilds in 1870<sup>520</sup> and Green included an account of their late-fifteenth century disputes in her work on English town life in 1894.<sup>521</sup> MacCaffrey was apparently unaware of the existence of their records and mainly refers to the tailors as part of his account of the founding of the Merchants' Company.<sup>522</sup> Kowaleski also made no use of their records in her study of Medieval Exeter.<sup>523</sup> Osborne constructed and discussed some biographies of tailors, drapers and haberdashers in her recent thesis on Elizabethan and Jacobean Exeter.<sup>524</sup> Stephens used the records of the Tailors' guild briefly in his work on Exeter's economic development in the

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<sup>520</sup> Toulmin Smith, *English Guilds*, pp. 299-337.

<sup>521</sup> J.R. Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, London, 1894, pp.338-368.

<sup>522</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.86, 136-142.

<sup>523</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.156.

<sup>524</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp. 240-246.

seventeenth century.<sup>525</sup> Beyond Exeter Swanson's work on medieval artisans contains an overview of the craft.<sup>526</sup> A valuable study of the York tailors as an occupation and guild was edited by Dobson and Smith in 2006.<sup>527</sup> A volume of the records of the Bristol tailors' guild was published by Fox in 1880,<sup>528</sup> and a study of the Salisbury tailors' guild and its ritual has been made by Douglas.<sup>529</sup> There has been work on the Tailors' guild in London by Davies and by Sleigh-Jackson.<sup>530</sup> Within the context of this study reference has been made to the research on the tailors within urban studies especially Palliser on York, Pound on Norwich, Dyer on Worcester and Champion on Shrewsbury.<sup>531</sup>

### *Sources for the Study of the Exeter Tailors*

To explore the lives of the Exeter tailors a wide range of sources has are drawn upon. The tailors are the best documented Exeter guild as their minute books survive from 1478 until the dissolution of the guild in 1846.<sup>532</sup> The contents of the first two extant Tailors' Act Books are valuable in this study. These are examined in conjunction with the Exeter freemen's and taxation records.<sup>533</sup> There are a few surviving tailors' probate inventories drawn up for the Exeter Orphans Court at the end of the period. It is also possible to examine the Exeter

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<sup>525</sup> Stephens, *Seventeenth-Century Exeter*, pp.76-77. Stephens showed briefly how the guild re-established itself after the Civil War and struggled against interlopers in the later seventeenth century.

<sup>526</sup> Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.45-50.

<sup>527</sup> R.B. Dobson and D.M. Smith, *The Merchant Taylors of York*, York, 2006.

<sup>528</sup> F.F. Fox, ed., *Some Account of the Ancient Fraternity of Merchant Taylors of Bristol: With Transcripts of Ordinances and Other Documents*, Bristol, 1880.

<sup>529</sup> A.M. Douglas, 'Midsummer in Salisbury: the Tailors' Guild and Confraternity 1444-1642', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 13, 1989, pp.35-51.

<sup>530</sup> M. P. Davies, ed., *The Merchant Taylors' Company of London: Court Minutes 1486-1493*, Stamford, 2000; id., 'Governors and Governed: The Practice of Power in the Merchant Taylors' Company in the Fifteenth Century' in Gadd and Wallis, ed., *Guilds, Society and Economy*, pp. 67-83; N. Sleigh Jackson, 'The Merchant Taylors' Company of London under Elizabeth I', *Costume*, 41, 2007, pp.45-52

<sup>531</sup> Palliser, *Tudor York*; Pound, *Tudor and Stuart Norwich*; Dyer, *City of Worcester*; Champion, 'Shrewsbury Lay Subsidy', pp.35-46.

<sup>532</sup> Within the tailors' records there are three minute books. Act Book I covers the period from 1478 to 1600 and consists of Act Book I, which commences in 1533 and continues up to 1600, but within it a smaller book, Act Book IA, which covers the years from 1478 to 1533. There are further minute books: Act Book II (covering the years 1600 to 1715) and Act Book III (from 1715 to 1846). There is also some miscellaneous material dating from 1466 to 1716.

<sup>533</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.1-59; *Exeter Freeman*, pp.51-109; Stoate ed, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*; TNA E179/97/186.

tailors in more depth using the shop fines evidence.<sup>534</sup> Information on the Exeter tailors is also found in wills, parish registers and deeds as well as within the late-fifteenth century aulnage accounts and the records of the dispute concerning the foundation of the Merchants' Company in the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>535</sup> The Common Fund Rolls within the Exeter Cathedral Archives were explored to try to trace any of the work which they may have undertaken for the Dean and Chapter.<sup>536</sup> The tailors were also traced in the extant customs records for the period.<sup>537</sup>

### *The Number, Wealth and Location of the Tailors*

The Tailors' guild in this period had about 70 members. This compares with other towns such as in York where between 1560 and 1569 there was a group of 69 master tailors and drapers.<sup>538</sup> There are some extant lists of guild members. In 1478, 50 men described as free of the city and 20 men who were 'bachelors' (junior members) took an oath to the fraternity. Four years later, in 1482, 43 tailors, who were probably the master craftsmen or shopholders, presented themselves, or provided men, for the Midsummer muster. There were, therefore, perhaps between 40 and 50 master tailors working within their guild at the end of Edward IV's reign.<sup>539</sup> There was little change by 1520 when 15 masters, 7 'master wardens' and 29 shopholders figure in a list of guild members, a total of 51 master craftsmen.<sup>540</sup> Four lists survive covering the years from 1559 to 1564 which show that there were at most 66 guild members, of whom about 40 were shopholders, working as either tailors or hosiers.<sup>541</sup> The Tailors' guild minute books give the impression that more men were being admitted to the guild by the 1540s and especially by the 1560s but this may be

<sup>534</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I ff. 159a-194b; Book 156B ff.1-42; Book 100 ff.57-58, 79-80, 109-110, 119-120, 135-136, 163-164, 177, 211.

<sup>535</sup> Wills TNA Prob 11; Aulnage Accounts TNA, E101/338/10-20, 347/10-14; Parish Registers DHC Exeter PR; Deeds DHC, ECA, ED/M; DHC, Devon Deeds; Exeter Cathedral Archives Deeds and Leases; Exeter Merchants' Company Papers; DHC, ECA, Book 185.

<sup>536</sup> Exeter Cathedral Archives, D and C 2839-2844 (1474, 1477, 1514, 1515, 1524, 1527), Account Rolls of the Stewards of the Exchequer of the Dean and Chapter; Erskine 'Medieval Financial Records' especially p.257.

<sup>537</sup> TNA, E122, E190; DHC, ECA, Town Customs.

<sup>538</sup> W.J. Sheils, 'The Company of Tailors and Drapers 1551-1662' in Dobson and Smith, ed., *Merchant Taylors of York*, p.55.

<sup>539</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A ff.4, 9, 92-96.

<sup>540</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A f.105.

<sup>541</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I ff.27b, 33b.

due to the fact that admissions were entered more systematically rather than any real increase in membership. The freemen's records for the latter part of the sixteenth century suggest there were about 55 tailors working in the city at one time.<sup>542</sup>

The Tenth of 1489 includes the names of 13 men who were listed as members of the Tailors' guild seven years earlier. Only two of them had been master of the guild but we know that at least six had held other lower guild office, or were to move on to do so. Five of those listed were at the start of their careers, being named as bachelors of the guild in 1482. Looking at those men who rendered payments to the Crown themselves rather than for another citizen in 1489, can help us to identify which tailors may have had considerable property or goods in Exeter.<sup>543</sup> Robert Chubbe was a substantial tailor who paid 15s 11d to the Crown for the six properties he owned plus another two tenements. He became mayor of Exeter in 1491. He lived in St Petrock and was a churchwarden there in 1481.<sup>544</sup> Robert Chubbe was the most significant member of the guild who was assessed in 1489. Many other tailors were paying for another citizen, probably as their tenants, but the amounts that they paid themselves were not large. Robert Chubbe was the only tailor in the 1482 list who could be seen in the top ranking of Exeter citizens in the Tenth of 1489.

By 1522 a few tailors were assessed highly in the Military Survey as shown in Table 4.1. John Bradmore paid on a valuation of 400 marks (£266). He was listed third in the 1520 tailors' membership list.<sup>545</sup> Thomas Hunt was the next ranked at £100 but below him there was a significant gap. As we would expect

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<sup>542</sup> Between 1551 and 1600 92 tailors were admitted to the city franchise. Assuming a working life span of 30 years we can multiply these figures and divide them by the number of years sampled from the freedom (50). The freeman's records for the period from 1501 to 1550 are too defective to make such a calculation earlier.

<sup>543</sup> See Appendix 6.

<sup>544</sup> Rowe and Cochlin, *Mayors*; DHC, Exeter St Petrock PW2. Robert Chubbe is not recorded as a trader in either the town or the national customs accounts. However, he is mentioned as a constable of the Staple in an action brought by his son in law William Osette in Chancery. It is extremely likely that he was a guild officer but we cannot be certain as the records first provide us with details of them in 1478 and then continuously from 1481. He was disenfranchised as part of the civic dispute in 1476.

<sup>545</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB, IA f.105; *Tudor Exeter*, p.20.

all those men who progressed to the mastership of the guild were assessed on above £20 of goods and were substantial craftsmen.<sup>546</sup>

By 1524/25 Thomas Hunt was the most prominent tailor as he served as mayor in September-October 1524 before the merchant William Hurst returned to the city to take on the role. Hunt was assessed on 200 marks (£133 6s 8d) worth of goods as shown in Table 4.2. He was the only tailor in the top ranking of Exeter citizens then. If we use the Anticipation of 1523 as our directory of the city's elite at the time it included: Geoffrey Lewis, William Peke, Thomas Hunt, John Bridgeman and John Bradmore who were members of the tailors' guild. Certainly Bradmore, Bridgeman and Hunt were exceptionally affluent citizens paying on 400 marks in the former and 200 marks in the latter two cases. Only one merchant, a merchant's widow and a merchant's son who had become a gentleman, were ranked higher.<sup>547</sup> There is also some indication that a few tailors may have been wealthy in the 1520s as they were assessed on lands. Some paid additional assessments such as John Bradmore who paid an extra 4s 8d on lands in St Mary Arches and William Mathewe who had additional tenements worth 36s in St Martin.<sup>548</sup> Bradmore and Mathewe, together with Geoffrey Lewys, were trusted men who were assessed as feoffees in 1522.<sup>549</sup> This all contributes to a picture of a group of prosperous tailors in the city. The next group of 11 middle-ranking tailors, assessed on £30 or £20 and in a few cases on £10 were rated a little higher in their assessments in 1524/5 than in 1522. The number of shopholders from the 1520 membership list was nearly the same in the survey and the subsidy indicating the stability of the group.

**TABLE 4.1 WEALTH OF TAILORS (1520) IN MILITARY SURVEY OF 1522**

ASSESSMENT	MASTERS	MASTER WARDENS	SHOPHOLDERS
£200-£300	1	0	0
£100-£199	1	0	0
£60-£99	0	0	0
£40-£59	0	0	0

<sup>546</sup> Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, pp.27-28.

<sup>547</sup> TNA, E179/97/186. See Appendix 5.

<sup>548</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.8, 20.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.21, 28.



£20-£39	6	0	0
£10-£19	1	2	2
£5-£9	4	1	2
£3-£4	1	1	0
£1-£2	0	2	6
Under £1	0	0	1
Nil	0	0	2
Unknown	1	1	16

(Sources: DHC, ECA, TAB IA and *Tudor Exeter*)

**TABLE 4.2 WEALTH OF TAILORS (1520) IN LAY SUBSIDY 1524/25**

ASSESSMENT	MASTERS	MASTER WARDENS	SHOPHOLDERS
£200-£300	0	0	0
£100-£199	1	0	0
£60-£99	0	0	0
£40-£59	4	0	0
£20-£39	0	0	2
£10-£19	2	2	0
£5-£9	4	1	2
£3-£4	0	1	3
£1-£2	0	2	5
Under £1	0	0	0
Nil	0	0	0
Unknown	2	1	17
Widow paid	2	0	0

(Sources: DHC,ECA, TAB IA and *Tudor Exeter*)

Even allowing for the taxation assessments being significantly lower by the mid-sixteenth century the valuations given for the tailors had fallen significantly by the time of the 1557 lay subsidy as seen in Table 4.3. If we compare this with the 1559 guild membership list, the top ranking tailor by this time was John Ripley (Repley) assessed at £40 in St Mary Major. He was the highest assessed person in that parish. Ripley is the only tailor who could be considered amongst the city's elite in the 1557 lay subsidy valuations, those paying on assessments of between £30 and £80. Even tailors who attained the mastership of the guild were being assessed on moderate amounts of goods in

the 1557 subsidy, such as Alexander Napper on £15. Many of the other former masters were only assessed on between £5 and £8. Only one tailor was assessed in 1557 on lands.<sup>550</sup> Hoyle has noted that lowest level land assessments were often used by this time as a form of tax avoidance and cannot be considered reliable.<sup>551</sup> Yet it appears that even allowing for the nature of the valuations at this time that the tailors were not as wealthy.

**TABLE 4.3 WEALTH OF TAILORS (1559) IN LAY SUBSIDY OF 1557**

ASSESSMENT	MASTERS	MASTER WARDENS SINGLE WARDENS & SHOPHOLDERS
£200-£300	0	0
£100-£199	0	0
£60-99	0	0
£40-59	1	0
£20-39	0	0
£10-£19	3            1(1544)	2
£5-£9	6	5    2 (1544) 1 (1577)
£3-£4	0	0
£1-£2	0            1(1544)	0    7 (1544)
Under £1	0	3
Nil	0	0
Unknown	2	26

(Sources: DHC, ECA, TAB IA and *Tudor Exeter*)

(1544) Assessment for tailor found only in the 1544 lay subsidy

(1577) Assessment for tailor found only in the 1577 lay subsidy

It is not possible to make any certain comments about the places of residence of the known tailors from the Tenth of 1489. By 1522 we have much more certain information as the Military Survey records the parish of residence of all those listed, except for those at the end of every parish entry who are identified as people who 'live outside the parish but have lands within'. By comparing the list of tailors' guild members for 1520 with the 1522 Military Survey we can

<sup>550</sup> Thomas Smyth paid on 20s worth of lands in St Stephen in 1557 and also in the later subsidy of 1577.

<sup>551</sup> Hoyle, *Tudor Taxation Records*, p.14.

identify that the central parishes of St Martin and St Mary Major were where the greatest number of tailors lived. We can also see from Table 4.4 that St Martin was more often the residence of the senior members of the guild. The fashionable and more socially prominent parishes of St Petrock and St Mary Arches were the other ones mainly favoured by the guild's elite. In total tailors are recorded as living in eleven parishes within the city.

**TABLE 4.4 TAILORS (1520) PARISHES OF RESIDENCE IN 1522**

PARISH	MASTERS	MASTER WARDENS	SHOPHOLDERS
St Martin	5	0	2
St Mary Major	3	0	4
St Petrock	3	0	2
St Mary Arches	2	1	0
St Paul	1	0	0
St John	0	1	2
St Olave	0	1	1
St Stephen	0	1	1
Holy Trinity	0	1	1
St George	0	1	1
All Hallows GS	0	1	0
Unknown	1	0	15

(Sources: DHC, ECA, TAB IA and *Tudor Exeter* pp.7-33)

**TABLE 4.5 TAILORS (1520) PARISHES OF RESIDENCE IN 1524/25**

PARISH	MASTERS	MASTER WARDENS	SHOPHOLDERS
St Martin	4	1	1
St Mary Major	1	0	2
St Petrock	3	0	3
St Mary Arches	2	1	0
St Paul	1	0	0
St John	0	0	3
St Olave	0	1	0
St Stephen	0	1	0

Holy Trinity	0	0	0
St George	0	1	0
All Hallows GS	0	1	0
St Lawrence	0	0	2
St Mary Steps	0	0	1
Widow paid *	2	0	1
Unknown	2	1	16

\* Two masters had died between 1522 and 1524/5 and their widows were assessed in the latter subsidy.

(Sources: DHC, ECA, TAB IA and *Tudor Exeter* pp.35-44).

This situation is broadly confirmed by the evidence provided by the lay subsidy of 1524/25 as shown in Table 4.5. For the guild's senior members St Martin, St Petrock and St Mary Arches were the most popular parishes. There were fewer tailors living in the more heavily populated parish of St Mary Major. This can be partly accounted for as two of the parish's prominent tailors, John Bridgeman and Christopher Partridge, had died in the intervening period.<sup>552</sup>

By 1524/5 two more parishes, St Lawrence and St Mary Steps, are known to have had resident tailors, indicating the widespread nature of the occupation. The picture is not complete, however, as there are a high number of listed tailor shopholders in 1520 who cannot be found in the 1522 survey or the 1524/5 subsidies for the city and the extramural parishes.<sup>553</sup> Clearly some tailors living outside the city walls were involved with the guild. However, none of the other

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<sup>552</sup> John Bridgeman's widow, Alice, was assessed on £40 worth of goods there in 1524/5 and her son Edward separately, in the same parish, on £6 of goods. John himself had been assessed on £40 worth of goods there in 1522. John Bridgeman was master of the tailors' guild in 1515 and 1519. In the appeals against the 1524 subsidy Alice was originally assessed on goods valued at 200 marks in St Mary Major but she pleaded for an a reduction of 7 marks as she had spent £95 on the burial of her husband and on the payment of his debts. The less wealthy Christopher Partridge's widow, Eleanor, was assessed on 40 shillings worth of goods and noted as a widow in 1524/5. In 1522 Christopher had been assessed on 10 marks worth of goods. Christopher had been master of the tailors' guild in 1513. In contrast with Alice, Eleanor's fortunes had declined more noticeably.

<sup>553</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.105; Stoate, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*, pp.67-68, 77, 80. Four of the extramural parishes were covered by the lay subsidy for Wonford Hundred and in one of these, St Edmund and Exe Island, John Brane is specifically designated as a tailor paying on goods valued at £2. He was not a guild member in 1520. However, in the same subsidy Geoffrey Anglenton also paid on £2 worth of goods. This was Gefery Ynglynton, recorded as a shopholder in the list of guild members for 1520.

guild members of 1520 were found in the subsidies for the extra mural parishes in 1524/25. By the 1530s we know that there was still a concentration of tailors living in St Petrock.<sup>554</sup>

By 1559 the residence of the tailors within the city showed some notable differences from that in the 1520s as seen in Table 4.6. The parishes favoured by the tailors remained broadly the same, though by then St Mary Major was where the most known members of the tailors' guild were living. The significant increase was in the less affluent but fairly central St Stephen. Some more senior tailors were resident in All Hallows Goldsmith Street. By the 1550s fewer senior members of the tailors' guild were living in wealthy St Petrock and even less in St Mary Arches. The known guild members were, however, still spread across 11 parishes in the city. No tailors have been directly identified in the extramural parishes in the taxation returns for the 1540s and 1550s. Overall, the tailors were less obviously resident in the socially prestigious central parishes, reflecting their declining fortunes by the mid-sixteenth century.

**TABLE 4.6 TAILORS (1559) PARISHES OF RESIDENCE IN 1557**

PARISH	MASTERS	MASTER& SINGLE WARDENS& SHOPHOLDERS
ST MARY MAJOR	2	6 * **
ST STEPHEN	1	6 *
ST MARTIN	2	3 * **
ST PETROCK	1	4 *
HOLY TRINITY	0	3 **
ALL HALLOWS GS	2	0
ST PAUL	0	2
ST GEORGE	1	0

<sup>554</sup>DHC, Exeter St Petrock PR1 from the occupations given for fathers in the baptism registers for the years between 1539 and 1546. There were five tailors, a draper-tailor and a draper recorded as fathers there, suggesting that St Petrock was still one of the parishes where more tailors lived.

ST JOHN	1	0
ST MARY ARCHES	1	0
ST KERRIAN	1	0
UNKNOWN	2	22

(Sources: DHC, ECA, TAB I and *Tudor Exeter* pp.55-59)

\*includes tailors who were listed in the 1544 lay subsidy but not the 1557 lay subsidy.

\*\*includes tailors who were listed in the 1577 lay subsidy but not the 1557 or 1544 lay subsidies.<sup>555</sup>

### *The Work of the Tailors*

#### a) The Types of Work Undertaken

Swanson has noted that tailors undertook most forms of garment-making including robes and jackets, hose, caps, hoods, vestments and embroidery.<sup>556</sup>

The type of work undertaken by the Exeter tailors is shown in Table 4.7, taken from that which they were certified to embark upon when they were 'abled' at the guild meetings between 1508 and 1572,

**TABLE 4.7 TAILORS - TYPE OF WORK 'ABLED IN MAKING' 1508-1572**

TYPE OF WORK	NUMBER OF TAILORS ABLED
MEN'S GARMENTS EXCEPT HOSEN	14
HOSEN	10
MEN'S GARMENTS	8
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S GARMENTS	7
WOMEN'S GARMENTS	7
WOMEN'S EXCEPT HOSEN	6
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S AND HOSEN	6
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S HOSEN	5
ALL GARMENTS	4
MEN'S GARMENTS AND HOSEN	4

<sup>555</sup> 22 Tailors from the 1559 guild list were located in the 1557 lay subsidy, 11 Tailors from the 1559 guild list were found only in the 1544 lay subsidy, 3 Tailors from the 1559 guild list were found only in the 1577 lay subsidy, 24 Tailors from the 1559 list were not traced in any of the lay subsidy returns.

<sup>556</sup> Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.45.

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S NOT HOSEN	4
COATS, DOUBLET'S AND HOSEN	1
HOSEN AND COATS	1
ALL MEN'S GARMENTS AND HOSEN AND WOMEN'S CASSOCKS AND PETTICOATS	1
WOMEN'S CASSOCKS FROCKS AND KIRTLES AND FRIEZE GOWNS, MEN'S DOUBLET'S, CLOAKS, JERKINS AND COATS HOSEN AND WOMEN'S PETTICOATS	1
ALL GARMENTS AND MEN'S HOSEN AND WOMEN'S PETTICOATS	1
MEN'S GARMENTS AND WOMEN'S CASSOCKS, KIRTLES AND PETTICOATS	1
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S GARMENTS EXCEPT TRAYNED GOWNS	1
MEN'S HOSEN, DOUBLET'S, CLOAKS AND COATS	1
MEN'S DOUBLET'S AND HOSEN	1
WOMEN'S HOSEN, MEN'S STOCKS AND 'MARYN(ER) SLAPPES'*	1
AS A TAILOR	1
ABLED-UNSPECIFIED	19

(Sources: DHC, ECA, TAB I and 1A)

From Table 4.7 it appears that more tailors were working on making men's garments, though there were a significant number of making just women's garments as well as many working in both men's and women's wear. Specific men's clothing identified included doublets, cloaks, coats, jerkins and stocks. There was more specialisation in the types of women's clothing including cassocks, petticoats, frocks, kirtles, frieze gowns and trained gowns. In the 'abling' records there are many references to the making or exception of 'hosen' suggesting the concern of the guild to regulate hose-making more carefully.

## b) The Making of Hose

Tailors were involved in the making of hose in Exeter. Hose were garments covering the legs and fitting up to the waist. For ordinary people in the earlier sixteenth century hose were more often knitted but by the mid century, for the wealthier, they were made from cloth.<sup>557</sup> Exeter tailors were working on cloth hose, as shown in the dispute in 1562 discussed below. However, they were also probably working on knitted hose, as indicated in the discussion of William Lant's working life in Appendix 19. There were some craftsmen, referred to in the tailors' records as 'hosiers,' who may have worked exclusively on producing these garments. Table 4.7 shows that some were engaged in the making of just hose and some hose with other garments. Tailors were able to make men's and women's hose. There were far more hosiers working than the small number recorded as entering the city freedom. The freeman's records identify only six designated hosiers over the whole of the period studied and the lists of those paying shop fines contain only a further seven men described as hosiers. A dispute concerning the making of hose in Exeter in 1562 was endorsed by 43 men of whom 27 were referred to as tailors and 12 as hosiers, with 4 not given a recorded occupation<sup>558</sup> This gives us some idea of the significance of working on hose within the working lives of the Exeter tailors. William Lant, who became master of the tailors' guild, was the most prominent craftsman designated as a hosier as he appears in second in place on the list.

In Bristol the tailors' guild ruled that no person could cut, make or sell men's or women's hose unless he was a member of the tailors' guild so the occupations were inextricably linked there. The wording of the royal proclamation in 1562 suggests that this was the case in many towns as 'all hosiers or tailors making hose' were to enter sureties to observe it.<sup>559</sup> In Exeter in May 1562 John Webbe, referred to as a 'tailor hosier', was bound by recognisance to follow the royal proclamation of that month. He had been putting more cloth into the making of hose than was lawful. At the same time the city council showed its concern by appointing four men 'for the search of great Hosen, in accordance

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<sup>557</sup> N. Mikhaila and J. Malcolm Davies, *The Tudor Tailor*, London, 2006, p.32; S. Vincent, *Dressing the Elite: Clothes in Early Modern England*, Oxford, 2003, pp.15-17.

<sup>558</sup> DHC, ECA, AB IV f.178.

<sup>559</sup> Fox, *Some Account*, p.64; Hughes & Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, Vol.2, p.189.



with the proclamation'.<sup>560</sup> The importance of making hose within the tailors' craft had increased since the late fourteenth century when hosiers were grouped more with leather workers, as they were often buying hides and leather.<sup>561</sup> The significance of the tailors within Exeter by the sixteenth century increased with the subsuming of the hosiers within their number.

### c) Tailors and Embroiderers

Tailors also worked as embroiderers and vestment-makers.<sup>562</sup> In York men with these specialisms entered the freedom, though some of these craftsmen were recorded as working for York Minster but did not enter the freedom.<sup>563</sup> In Bristol John Spence, a vestment-maker, was proved by the guild to 'takyth upon hymn all manner garments'. Spence clearly worked as a tailor as well as a vestment-maker.<sup>564</sup> Women were also involved in this work, though most of those recorded in York were men. Exeter's Dean and Chapter was no doubt a ready employer. In the period studied no men entered the freedom specifically as embroiderers. However, Walter Kent had done so in 1455, as the apprentice of John Gauge, who was described as a tailor and embroiderer,<sup>565</sup> which links the two trades in Exeter.<sup>566</sup>

Four men paid shop fines as embroiderers in the early part of the sixteenth century. One of these, John Johnson, brought a case to Chancery against the priest Thomas Raddon whose kinswoman Katherine had broken her agreement with him concerning her training as a silkwoman.<sup>567</sup> Johnson paid a shop fine

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<sup>560</sup> DHC, ECA, AB IV ff.178-9.

<sup>561</sup> Kowalseki, *Local Markets*, p.156.

<sup>562</sup> Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.51-52, S, Hogarth, 'Ecclesiastical Vestments and Vestment-makers in York 1300-1600', *York Historian*, 7, 1986, pp.2-11.

<sup>563</sup> Hogarth, 'Ecclesiastical Vestments', pp. 4-7.

<sup>564</sup> Fox, *Some Account*, p.18.

<sup>565</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.52.

<sup>566</sup> No more information on John Gauge has been found though the name continues to have a link with tailoring in Exeter as in 1522 Thomas Gage was working as a servant for the prominent tailor John Tuckfield. Walter Kent continued to work in Exeter in the mid-1470s when he was disenfranchised and re-instated in the tailor's dispute with the city and Watkyn Kent, described as late of Exeter, brought a Chancery case against the leading Exeter tailor Robert Chubbe between 1480 and 1483. TNA C1/61/182. Other members of the Kent family, John and William, were certainly involved in tailoring in the following decades

<sup>567</sup> TNA, C1/372/2. It was alleged that Raddon's kinswoman Katherine had been brought to Johnson 'to be instructe and taught the crafte of a sylkwoman' She was to be under Johnson's

from 1512 to 1517 and was described as a 'broderer' and in 1517 as a tailor. He lived in St Martin, near to the cathedral.<sup>568</sup> 'Broderer' is one of the relevant craft-names identified by Hogarth in York in the fourteenth century to denote an embroiderer.<sup>569</sup> Other embroiderers also paid shop fines. Henry Brewyster was described as a 'broderer' when paying his shop fine in 1515 and in the following year he was also described as being in the Bishop's Fee. He may have been living there but still decided that he needed to be authorised by the city council, unlike embroiderers in York. This may suggest that he was undertaking more secular work too and required the city's sanctioning. Further in 1517 he paid his shop fine partly in kind, being 4d and one pair of shears thus suggesting he was carrying out some work in tailoring. By 1524 Brewyster was resident in St Lawrence and was assessed on £4 of goods, so was established as a middling craftsman.<sup>570</sup> Hogarth has contended that although there were some overlaps the term 'embroiderer' replaced 'vestment-maker' at the time of the Reformation.<sup>571</sup> A search has been made of the cathedral's extant Common Fund rolls for the period.<sup>572</sup> Some of them are fragmentary and damaged and they are in more summary form than some of the rolls from the fourteenth century. No reference was found to any payments being made to embroiderers or vestment-makers within them.

#### d) Disputes with other Crafts

The only demarcation dispute concerning the making of garments took place with the leather jerkin-makers. The tailors claimed the making of jerkins as their preserve and in 1553 John Growte, a shoemaker, was fined 10 shillings for

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tutelage for four years for which, it had been agreed, he was to receive 5 marks (£3 3s 8d) for her learning and 40 shillings per year for her board and lodging. Johnson claimed that he had received no payment and that Katherine had left after three years.

<sup>568</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I f.169 where he is described as a 'broderer' in 1516. He also paid shop fines in a number of other years. DHC, ECA, AB I ff. 159a, 167a, 171b, 174b, 176b. His residency in St Martin's parish is noted in 1522 and 1524; *Tudor Exeter*, pp. 9, 36.

<sup>569</sup> Hogarth, 'Ecclesiastical Vestments', p.6.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid., pp.5-6. The surname 'Brewyster' may also be a craft-name suggesting an embroiderer. Hogarth noted that this could be one of a number of corruptions of 'broderer'. Nicholas Johnson was also an embroiderer paying a shop fine and in 1516 paid this partly in kind, being 4d and a pair of women's sleeves and a pair of women's hose.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> They survive for 1474, 1477, 1514, 1515, 1517, 1524 and 1525 ;Exeter Cathedral Archives, Account Rolls of the Stewards of the Exchequer of the Dean and Chapter; D and C 2839-2844; Erskine, 'Medieval Financial Records', pp.254-266 especially p.257.

cutting leather jerkins in the city.<sup>573</sup> General complaint was made to the mayor but the tailors lost their case as it was shown that in London jerkin-makers were members of the cordwainers' company.<sup>574</sup> Some relaxation took place as in 1558 Hugh Symon, a 'gyrkyn maker' was admitted to the tailors' guild to make leather jerkins. He was fined 3s 4d presumably for work he had already been carrying out and was to pay 4s yearly, payable quarterly, to the guild as long as he continued to cut leather jerkins. Symon was the only jerkin-maker admitted to the freedom of the city in the period studied.<sup>575</sup>

There do not seem to have been any disputes in Exeter with other craftsmen such as skimmers, furriers, shearmen and cappers, where the work might have overlapped. Equally, apart from the hosiers, the Tailors' guild did not contain craftsmen from any other occupation.<sup>576</sup> The Exeter tailors did not play any role in the making of headgear and cappers appear as a separate occupation in the city records. There were a few disputes in other towns with rival craftsmen such as shearmen, skimmers and furriers. Swanson noted some specialisation in her studies, such as in hose and in the furring of garments.<sup>577</sup>

#### e) Workplaces and Work Agreements

Tailors' workplaces varied from rooms which doubled as living quarters to substantial retail shops with space to display goods. Most common references in the records are to the shops of tailors which would have included a work space and a retail space. The Tailors' guild records note many instances of men being fined for making garments either in their own house or in the houses of

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<sup>573</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.18b.

<sup>574</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185 no.22.

<sup>575</sup> Symon played a role in the dispute with the merchants as he had taken a copy of the merchant's 'corporation' from the tailor Alexander Napper 'to carry where he list and have it read' and when he had returned home William Lant had sent to him for this copy. Symons, Napper and Lant all lived in All Hallows Goldsmith Street which appears to have been the centre of the agitation led by the tailors. *Exeter Freeman*, p.82; DHC, ECA, Book 185 No. 10; DHC, ECA, TAB I f.25a.

<sup>576</sup> See the section on the Tailors' guild below.

<sup>577</sup> Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.40, 48, 50; E. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1966, p.71. This contrasts with Beverley and Coventry where tailors and shearmen were part of the same guild and Shrewsbury where skimmers and tailors formed a united guild. Disputes occurred with the furriers in York where by the mid fifteenth century the tailors had taken over the furring of garments, especially in lamb skins. Exeter men were members of the London skimmers' guild in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

other, usually named, individuals. It is likely that they were working in parts of subdivided houses such as in 1520 when 'Walter Whytro ded worke yn on Margre Harys hows yn on Mr Barnhows ys chamber'.<sup>578</sup> Tailors in Exeter by the end of the period may have had a more recognisable shop as in June 1566 the guild decreed that 'the shoppe wyndowes of David Wyndytt and Roger Davye shall be shutt downe'.<sup>579</sup> The use of shops is confirmed in the earliest extant inventories for Exeter tailors in 1569 and 1577. William Lant in 1569 had a lower, higher and corner shop. Thomas Byrd in 1577 had a workshop, a cloth shop and a wool shop.<sup>580</sup> The use of shops, however, was largely linked to the tailors' wealth and some poorer tailors continued to work in rooms at the end of the period such as in 1565 when William House and Matthew Cocks were fined for working in the houses of other named men.<sup>581</sup>

With regard to what could be working premises the extant Exeter deeds make reference to tailors' tenements, messuages, and houses but also shops, tenements with shops and solars. Sometimes a garden is also mentioned.<sup>582</sup> The deeds enable us to have some idea of the location of tailors' businesses such as in the city's High Street, just off it at the Broadgate, and in less prestigious locations such as the East Gate. Some tailors took on properties owned by the city and some lived in properties owned by the Dean and Chapter.<sup>583</sup>

Tailors may also have sold goods at stalls. This could have been on market days, at fair times or after 1538 in Exeter in a specific market. In 1519 the guild reprimanded John Kellander, a Whimple man, as he 'dyd stand yn the market

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<sup>578</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.107. Whytro admitted making a doublet and a pair of hose for Mr Barnhouse and that he was not licensed by the guild to do so. He faced a hefty fine of 2s.

<sup>579</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.34b.

<sup>580</sup> DHC, ECA, Orphans' Court Inventories, No.13, No.28.

<sup>581</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f. 35a.

<sup>582</sup> Portman, *Exeter Houses*, p.51 suggests that many central properties did not have any garden at all. Affluent citizens often rented them elsewhere especially in Friernhay and in the north-east and south-west of the city precincts.

<sup>583</sup> DHC, ECA, ED/M 881, 891C, 903, 913; Reece Index B169 from 1564 City Rental; Exeter Cathedral Archives, Dean and Chapter 5177. Richard Turner in 1484 held a chamber in the tower of the East Gate and a house adjacent to it and a tenement and garden near the East Gate too. Some tailors took on properties owned by the city such as in that in 1564 the tailor John Webb was living in a tenement and shop at the Broadgate in St Petrock. Some tailors lived in properties owned by the Dean and Chapter for example Thomas Hunt who held a tenement in the High Street from them in the early 1520s.

wt kloth'.<sup>584</sup> In Bristol in 1489 it had been agreed that men's and women's hose was no longer to be sold in the High Street or the market place upon boards or tressels but only by members of the tailors' guild in their shops or houses though an exception was made at fair times.<sup>585</sup>

Some disputes which are recorded in the tailors' records give us indications of how they operated their businesses. Customers often provided the tailors with the cloth to be worked upon. This was also the case in Worcester at the time, though Exeter tailors certainly had more stocks of cloth in their shops than Worcester ones.<sup>586</sup> Complaints were made in 1480 against the Exeter tailors John Rowter, John Kartor and John Walsche alias Kent that they had received broadcloth or blue, in all cases to make gowns, but that they had kept back or stolen some of the cloth provided. In Rowter's case the tailor's patterns, 'patrons of blacke paper in our Comen Kofer of record,' were produced to establish his lack of guilt. In Kartor's case it was found that he had wasted a quarter of broadcloth due to his 'lacke of konnyng' (skill). In Walsche's case the guild found in his favour stating that no cloth had been stolen, though in the making of the gown a yard was found to be wasted due to the tailor's lack of skill. In these cases cloth for making the garments had clearly been provided by the customer.<sup>587</sup> This accords with what is known of how tailors worked in other communities at a later date.<sup>588</sup> In the surviving probate inventories of tailors there is very no mention of any ready-made clothes in their shops though they did have quantities of cloth in stock indicating clothes were made to order.<sup>589</sup> Successful tailors did however move into cloth selling as drapers and many successful drapers began their careers as tailors, notably Griffin Ameredith who became city receiver in 1554.<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA, f.100.

<sup>585</sup> Fox, *Some Account*, p.17.

<sup>586</sup> Dyer, *City of Worcester*, pp.129-130.

<sup>587</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA, f.11; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.321.

<sup>588</sup> J. Whittle & E. Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth Century Household: The World of Alice le Strange*, Oxford, 2012, p.67.

<sup>589</sup> DHC, ECA, Orphans Court Inventories nos.13 (William Lante 1569) and 28 (Thomas Byrd 1577).

<sup>590</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.532a.

## f) Tailoring Businesses and Business Networks

The number of apprentices taken on by a master also gives an indication of the size, longevity and success of the businesses, though we need to bear in mind the restriction placed by the guild on tailors that no master was to have more than one apprentice at any one time without the guild's sanction.<sup>591</sup> It may be that, as Wallis has suggested, many masters only took on one or two apprentices in the course of a career.<sup>592</sup> Apprentices must have allowed successful businesses to expand more significantly. Within other Exeter crafts the surviving late-fifteenth century ordinances of the cordwainers and bakers placed no restrictions on the number of servants or apprentices kept by one master.<sup>593</sup> The new Merchants' Company, by Elizabeth's reign, also placed no restrictions on the number of apprentices in its charter.<sup>594</sup> However, the cloth-makers, tailors and shoemakers were limited by the Statute of Artificers in 1563 to the employment of at least one journeyman for every one of their apprentices in excess of two.

The freemen's lists record the number of known apprentices taken on by master tailors as shown in Appendix 8. Even allowing for the problems with the records the tailors of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century did not take on many apprentices and the norm was one. By the early sixteenth century a few successful tailors like Richard Chubbe had four over his career and Geoffrey Lewys and Hugh Davy had three. An examination of the dates on which they took up the apprenticeship suggests that Hugh Davy could have engaged just one apprentice at a time though for Geoffrey Lewys and Richard Chubbe at least two must have been serving together. Thomas Andrew was the master of four apprentices though they seem to be divided into the two stages of his career. In 1494/5 two, John Borlasse and John William, both completed their terms and certainly they both worked as tailors. However, in 1512 and 1514 one of Andrew's sons, Richard, and his eventual son-in-law John Blackaller, completed their terms and both subsequently worked as merchants trading

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<sup>591</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.6-8; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, pp.312-316.

<sup>592</sup> P. Wallis, C.R. Webb and C. Minns, 'Leaving Home and Entering Service: the age of apprenticeship in early modern London', *Continuity and Change*, 25:3, 2010, pp.377-404.

<sup>593</sup> Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, pp.331-337.

<sup>594</sup> DHC, ECA/ 58/7/11; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, pp.1-10.

overseas. In the years after 1550 taking on more apprentices was more commonly recorded. Twelve tailors are known to have had two or more apprentices completing their terms and entering the freedom after 1550 whereas in the earlier period only four were identified. The largest numbers which can be convincingly identified are the six apprentices of Richard Prouze and the five of Alexander (Sandy) Napper. In both cases they must have had apprentices serving together. Prouze had four apprentices entering the freedom between 1575 and 1577 and Napper had certainly two together in the late 1560s and late 1570s. Although businesses were expanding, the number of apprentices employed at one time by tailors generally was lower than for the merchants.<sup>595</sup>

Cases in the Court of Common Pleas between 1470 and 1554 provide information about the social status and geographical location of the clientele of the Exeter tailors.<sup>596</sup> Cases where a known Exeter tailor brought an action as a plaintiff are valuable in examining the networks of some individual tailors and these have been considered alongside the more numerous cases where an Exeter tailor, usually specifically identified as such in the records, was the defendant in a debt case. Although 11 Exeter tailors were involved in some other types of cases which came before the court such as trespass, assault and abduction, these have not been examined as the intention was to trace solely their business networks.

A fuller pattern was built up in the case of individual tailors who brought a number of debt cases before Common Pleas. The most well represented of these was Richard Chubbe who was the plaintiff in 14 debt cases between 1523 and 1528.<sup>597</sup> Thomas Hunte was the plaintiff in eight debt cases between 1524 and 1548.<sup>598</sup> No other Exeter tailors are represented in the Common Pleas

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<sup>595</sup> Overall 26 masters have been identified taking on three or more apprentices in the period studied: 18 of them were merchants or mercers, 5 were tailors, 2 were goldsmiths and 1 was a weaver. This, therefore, supports the view that tailors may well have depended more on wage labour.

<sup>596</sup> The project has so far indexed substantial numbers of years but only as far as 1554. See 1.7

<sup>597</sup> All Common Pleas material was accessed on <http://aalt.uh.edu/indices/CP40/html>. Chubbe cases here: TNA, CP40/1038, 1042, 1046, 1049, 1055, 1057.

<sup>598</sup> TNA, CP 40/1042, 1064, 1096, 1120, 1127, 1135. He also brought a covenant case against a Weare Giffard tailor and was the plaintiff and the defendant in trespass cases. In 1554 his

records on this scale. No men identified as Exeter hosiers brought cases, though some did appear as defendants. The Chubbe and Hunte cases provide insight into the business networks of individual tailors as shown in more detail in Appendices 17 and 18.

Richard Chubbe was master of the Tailors' guild in 1503 and city bailiff in 1517. He lived in St Paul in the 1520s. He leased a shop in the High Street in July 1529.<sup>599</sup> We do not know why Chubbe brought 14 debt cases in a short span of years. He brought debt cases only in Common Pleas, though he has been identified in the Chancery records bringing four other types of cases.<sup>600</sup> Richard Chubbe is always referred to as an Exeter tailor in the Common Pleas records. Most of his debtors were from across Devon and they came from the east, south and west of the county, though not the north. He had a number of clients in Somerset and a few in Cornwall. The largest number of his clients came from gentry backgrounds although some were yeomen or clergy. Equally there were craftsmen from a wide geographical area. His most prominent known debtor was John, Lord Zouche of Bonham in Somerset, now Stourton and Stourhead, 8 miles south of Frome.

Thomas Hunt also brought debt cases to Common Pleas. He had been the apprentice of Richard Chubbe.<sup>601</sup> Hunt became more prominent and much wealthier than Chubbe by 1524 according to the taxation assessments.<sup>602</sup> He had a long civic career and became mayor in 1538. He served as master of the Tailors' guild in 1520 and 1530. Hunt lived in St Petrocks and is referred to in the Common Pleas cases variously as a tailor, draper and alderman of Exeter. In Chancery he is also referred to as a merchant on one occasion, though from the evidence of the customs accounts we know that he did not have very much

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widow and her new husband, John Strobridge, brought a case, as his executors, against George Lewsmore, a Tiverton clothier.

<sup>599</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.37 and DHC, ECA, AB I f.121b.

<sup>600</sup> Concerning property in South Street and in Pinhoe as well as a silver piece, silver spoons and money entrusted by his wife for her children, who had died. Chubbe had married Johan, the widow of the Exeter shoemaker Peter Johnson: TNA, C1/399/27, 483/35, 486/38, 493/21.

<sup>601</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.65.

<sup>602</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.13, 18, 37, 38, 50. In 1524 Richard Chubbe was assessed on £40 worth of goods in St Paul whereas Thomas Hunt was assessed on 200 marks (£266) in St Petrock.



involvement in overseas or coastal trade. He died in 1548.<sup>603</sup> He brought no known actions himself in Chancery. Hunt's debtors also came predominantly from Devon. There is a strong representation from Honiton. Hunt certainly held property in East Devon in the vicinity of the roads to Honiton and Ottery St Mary, which were subsequently also held by his son.<sup>604</sup> Hunt may have been involved, as a draper, more in the buying and selling of cloth as his network of trade included mercers in Honiton and Launceston. Only one craftsman is identified as his debtor and it is likely that he worked more with the gentry of Devon and its adjacent counties, though his network spanned wider and he had a Reading debtor. Hunt also had socially eminent clients such as Sir Philip Champernowne from Modbury. In contemporary memory within Exeter, ten years after Hunt's death, he was described as an artificer who had become a merchant and a draper who had been a tailor.<sup>605</sup>

There is less evidence concerning the business activities of the Exeter tailors in cases where they were defendants in debt cases in Common Pleas. Of 23 cases brought against them we only have the full details of 4 plaintiffs, who include an Exeter gentleman and a gentleman from Southawke (near South Tawton), in Devon. There is some evidence of the work of tailors with clients from further afield. Nicholas Rutter, living in St Stephen in 1524/25, was in debt to a London mercer in 1521. Rutter was an obscure figure and there is no evidence that he served as an official in the Tailors' guild or that he became a freeman.<sup>606</sup> Christopher Partridge was not a wealthy tailor, though he did become master of the guild. In 1523 he owed a debt to Raphael Marusso, a merchant from Genoa.<sup>607</sup> It was one of a number of cases brought by Marusso that year, who was then resident in London. The cases concerning Rutter and Partridge give some indications that less prominent Exeter tailors may well have taken part in some business activities well beyond the city. From other records we can determine that two of the other plaintiffs were Exeter mercers, in 1502

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<sup>603</sup> TNA, Prob 11/32/11. Hunt was buried at St Petrock on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1548: DHC, Exeter St Petrock PR1.

<sup>604</sup> TNA, C142/86/20, 142/141/54. Thomas Hunt's inquisition taken in 1548 includes the manor of Farringdon and property in Aylesbeare, Rockbeare, Broadclyst and Clyst St George. His son George's inquisition, taken in 1565, also includes these holdings: Vivian ed. *Visitations*, p.494

<sup>605</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185 no. 22.

<sup>606</sup> TNA, CP 40/1031; *Tudor Exeter*, p.36.

<sup>607</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA, f.2; TNA, CP40/1038.

and 1554, providing limited evidence for Exeter tailors being customers of mercers within the city.<sup>608</sup> The Exeter hosiers in the Common Pleas cases were all defendants. From the six cases we have details of three plaintiffs. One of these was a London mercer in 1500 and another was a Gloucester merchant in 1508. The evidence here suggests that some Exeter hosiers also had business links further afield.

Both Chubbe and Hunt had substantial businesses. The amount of debt which Chubbe claimed was owing to him in Common Pleas cases brought varied from the £45 by John Stowell to four cases where 45 shillings was owed. Hunt also claimed that the Honiton glover, John Elys, owed him £45 and the smallest amount was 45 shillings owed by two clients. None of the other Exeter tailors alleged that they such large debts outstanding though they did claim amounts ranging from £10 to 45 shillings. Claims for debt brought against Exeter tailors ranged from 45 shillings to 10 marks, though the latter also involved a condition concerning the sale of a bay gelding.

An early inventory from 1548 for Thomas Hunt has been found in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury records but it lists the contents of his household rather than his business premises.<sup>609</sup> However, much insight into the work of an Exeter tailor is provided by the earliest tailors' probate inventory in the Exeter Orphans' Court records, that for William Lant in 1569.<sup>610</sup> A biographical-business study of Lant forms Appendix 19. A brief biography and a transcript of the Orphans' Court inventory are included in Osborne's recent thesis. She notes that there was no tailoring equipment in his inventory as such but speculates that it may have been removed.<sup>611</sup> There are, however, items connected with retail trading in his 'lower' and 'higher' shop. Lant was well connected within the city and was master of the tailors' guild twice. He may have worked as a tailor-hosier and made mainly men's clothes. It is likely that he specialised in lower quality kersey cloth. Lant's greatest creditor owed him £30, though the next debt outstanding to him was £5 and many outstanding sums were much smaller. His debtors, and probable clients, were mainly from Exeter and East Devon though they ranged into South and West Devon,

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<sup>608</sup> TNA, CP40/959; 1157.

<sup>609</sup> TNA, Prob 11/32/11.

<sup>610</sup> DHC, ECA, Exeter Orphans' Court Inventory no.13.

<sup>611</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp. 244-245, 513-526.

Somerset and Bristol. About half were local gentry and their servants, though his clients also included Exeter craftsmen.<sup>612</sup> This is further supported by the evidence concerning Thomas Byrd, an Exeter tailor who died in 1577 and whose main trading contacts were in East and West Devon, as shown in Appendix 20 showing similarities with the patterns observed for Chubbe and Hunt.

Exeter tailors were, therefore, operating businesses based around shops from which they made clothing for customers on demand. This sometimes involved wealthy clients who came from a fairly wide geographical area in the South West and who were paying, in some cases, considerable sums for their tailoring services or were accumulating significant debts over time. However, even middle ranking tailors had connections with probable clients from a wider area.

### *The Structure of the Craft*

#### a) Masters and Shop-Holders

The records of the Tailors' guild provide a good insight into the structure of the craft. This is especially evident from the craft ordinances dating from the reign of Edward IV. These stated that the master craftsmen who belonged to the guild were to be worth £20 in goods, so they were men of some substance according to Cornwall's classification that men assessed on over £5 worth of goods must have been master craftsmen and that £20 would indicate a man of more substance.<sup>613</sup> The master craftsmen were the 'Shopholders'. The 1520 membership list distinguishes these groups: the later membership lists of 1559 and 1564 do so less clearly, although former masters of the guild are distinguished by the title 'Mr'. In the 1520 list many can be identified as Exeter freemen, but not all guild members.<sup>614</sup> Since being a freeman was a guild requirement this suggests that the freemen's lists are not complete. Significantly most of the identified freeman shopholders were at the head of the shopholder part of the listing.<sup>615</sup> These were the masters and employers within the tailoring

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<sup>612</sup> See Appendix 19.

<sup>613</sup> Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, pp.23-26.

<sup>614</sup> All but one of the 15 masters, all the 7 master wardens and 11 of the 29 shopholders.

<sup>615</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB1A f.105.

craft. There is little indication of opposition from the lower ranks to this group of senior figures who ran the guild, as there was to the leadership of the Weavers' guild in Bristol in 1463/64.<sup>616</sup> The 1520 list shows that the masters and master wardens were city freemen though some of the shopholders are not designated as such. Of 160 guild officials who have been traced in the years from 1478 to 1570 only 29, or just under 18%, as far as we know, were not freemen. The situation was much the same in the period from 1570 to 1600 when only eight officials are not known to have been enfranchised.

#### b) Bachelors and Apprentices.

There was within the guild a group of 'bachelors' who are far less documented. They were the junior members of the craft.<sup>617</sup> Sleigh- Jackson found the 'bachelors' or 'yeomanry' company of tailors to be a struggling group in Elizabethan London.<sup>618</sup> But in Exeter, at least in the 1480s, it appears that the bachelors were merely the young members of the guild who would usually progress to senior membership. There is an extant list of Exeter 'Bachelors' for 1482 and of the 18 men listed 13 were traced taking up the city freedom. Three of the bachelors listed in 1482 were to rise in later years to become the master of the guild.<sup>619</sup> Eight lists are also extant of men who made quarterly payments towards the provision of a priest for the guild between 1480 and 1482. The lists of payers are divided into masters and bachelors. In all but one of the lists 18 bachelors are recorded and in the other one there were 16. The number of masters paying varied between 28 and 31. Bachelors always paid 2d whereas the payments made by masters varied from 20d to 3d according to their seniority. Nearly all of the bachelors (16 of the 18) were identified as men who became Exeter tailors and in a few cases, such as Thomas Andrew, prominent citizens.<sup>620</sup> The bachelors were a distinct group, described in the tailors' records

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<sup>616</sup> Fleming, *Time, Space and Power*. <http://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/OutputFile/924989>

<sup>617</sup> A bachelor in the London guilds was a junior or 'yeoman' member. This differed between guilds and later they were only appointed for ceremonial occasions such as the Lord Mayor's Day. In 1427 there were a group of 'Diverse pesones ikallyd Bachelors' in the London grocer's guild: OED citing J.B. Heath, *Some Account of the Worshipful Company of Grocers*, London, 1869, p.5.

<sup>618</sup> Sleigh Jackson, 'Merchant Taylors Company'.

<sup>619</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I A f.96. Thomas Andrew in 1494, William Peke in 1496 and John Scryvener in 1497.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid.

as 'the bachelesis ffelisscyppe' for whom positive progression within their trade was normal.<sup>621</sup> There is no reference to them, however, in the sixteenth century.

Apprentices were a vital part of the continued success and future of tailoring businesses. The ordinances for the Tailors' guild from the reign of Edward IV, stated that every master taking on an apprentice was to bring him before the guild and have the indenture enrolled, paying 12d for this.<sup>622</sup> In 1538 a proclamation was made by the city council that all apprenticeship indentures were to be enrolled in a book which was to be kept in the Council Chamber.<sup>623</sup> None of these original apprenticeship indentures survive nor does any apprenticeship book. However, within the first two Tailors' Act Books details are recorded from six indentures. These are significant as no other details of any other apprenticeship indentures are known to survive for the any of the crafts or occupations in Exeter between 1470 and 1570. Three of these concern John Bridgeman, which may account for why these have survived within the tailors' records as he wrote some of the entries in the Tailors' Act Book.<sup>624</sup> The first is a short witnessed endorsement dating from 1521 stating that Roger Dunscome had completed his apprenticeship with John Bridgeman 'taylor of exceter' which he had commenced in 1514.<sup>625</sup> The second records the start of Bridgeman's son Edward's apprenticeship with him for a term of ten years in 1517.<sup>626</sup> The third dates from 1519 and is a witnessed agreement concerning the start of William Estcott's seven year apprenticeship with Bridgeman.<sup>627</sup> The other entries record the key details of agreements. They were drawn up in 1551, 1553 and 1562.<sup>628</sup>

Overall, the six extracts from indentures share some common ground.

Apprentices were to be made free of the guild and of the city at the expense of

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<sup>621</sup> DHC ECA TAB 1A f.93, TAB I f.18a.

<sup>622</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.6-8; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.316.

<sup>623</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I f.149a.

<sup>624</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.100. There are three references to Bridgman in the first person suggesting that he was writing the records at that time, such as 'I, John Brygeman the Mr and the Wardens war at the Hall'.

<sup>625</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.76.

<sup>626</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.87.

<sup>627</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.98.

<sup>628</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I ff.17a, 28b, 31a. For John Parkehouse as an apprentice of Ralph Sandyford, tailor; John Lobdon the son of John Lobdon of Tiverton, apprentice of Richard Prouz, tailor; and Gabriel Sayre, the apprentice of Richard Ryght.

the master at the end of the term. The number of years was always stipulated and was seven years in four cases and ten in the other two. Also the apprentice was to receive a sum from the master at the end of the term which varied from 20 to 40 shillings. None of the extracts record the initial obligations of the master or more details on the conditions of the apprenticeship. The general absence of references to places of origin would suggest that most were young men from Exeter, though Richard Prouz took on John Lobdon, the son of a Tiverton man of the same name, who had died by the time of the agreement.

Overall for Exeter it is possible to examine the apprentices shown as entering the guild in the extant records of the tailors' guild and to compare them with those designated as tailors in the freedom records. In total 31 are recorded. Five entries date from the 1530s when we know that under-recording was an issue in both guild and city records. On the whole for this, and the subsequent period, most tailors were following their regulations and entering the city freedom when they became guild members. The entries before 1530 are not sufficient for any conclusions to be drawn though it is clearly possible to identify a number of new apprentices who went on to progress as city tailors. However, restrictions on the number of apprentices in a master tailor's employment do not appear to have been fully enforced. Richard Chubbe had two apprentices, John Southey and John Parre, who both took up the city freedom in 1531/32, using the completion of their apprenticeship with him as the means to gain it, so they must both have been working with him as apprentices at the same time.<sup>629</sup> Given the guild restrictions it is likely that he had special permission. Disputes concerning apprentices were dealt with by the guild as discussed below.

#### c) Wage Labourers, Journeymen, Servants and Free Sowers

Within the craft of tailoring there was a large reliance on wage labour. These men were variously called 'servants', 'free sowers' and later especially 'journeymen' in the records. These were skilled workers. In the London Tailors' guild the free sowers were men who had completed their apprenticeship but did not have fixed employment. There, in 1449, they were instructed to be available

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<sup>629</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.72.

to be employed as wage workers to be paid by the day or by the garment and they were to live in common lodgings.<sup>630</sup> In Exeter most of the men appearing as free sowers cannot be found taking up the freedom of the city, though a few can, such as Andrew Mannyng, servant to Richard Chubbe in 1503, who entered the freedom designated as a tailor in 1511/12 and became master warden of the guild in 1519.<sup>631</sup> The original ordinances from the reign of Edward IV stipulated that no master was to have more than three servants and one apprentice at any one time without the permission of the guild master.<sup>632</sup> Regulations were also set out concerning the employment of 'servants' by new masters. In his first working year he could take one 'servant' and in the next two he could take on two and three 'servants' respectively. In the third year he could also commence an agreement with an apprentice. Other ordinances were issued in 1480, 1500, 1516 and 1549 but the guidelines set down originally seem to have been adhered to.<sup>633</sup> However, in 1559 under a general tightening up of regulations it was felt necessary to state that no journeyman or servant was to be employed under the age of 20 and that servants employed should have served a seven year apprenticeship.<sup>634</sup> No issue with sub-contracting by servants of other servants as their wage workers is evident as occurred in some other towns.<sup>635</sup>

The tailors' records do contain some lists of 'free sowers' for the years from 1480, 1494 to 1505 and 1521 to 1522. They give the name of the masters and their 'free sowers,' and they all paid 20d per year to the guild. This accords with the first guild ordinances which stated that wage workers earning more than 20 shillings or being employed for fifteen days were to pay 20d as free sowers.<sup>636</sup> The term itself gives some indication of the type of work which they may have been undertaking and what was required of them by the master craftsmen.

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<sup>630</sup> M.Davies, "'Citizens and Foreyns': Craft Guilds and Regulation in Late Medieval London' in A. Carcavarsi, M. Davies and L. Mocarelli, ed., *Between Regulation and Freedom: Work and Manufacture in European Cities, Fourteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, Cambridge, 2018, p.16.

<sup>631</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1 ff. 40, 99 ; *Exeter Freeman*, p.66.

<sup>632</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.6-8; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, pp.312-316.

<sup>633</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.9-10, 35, 85-86; TAB I ff.114a-115a; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, pp.327-329.

<sup>634</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.27a.

<sup>635</sup> Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.45.

<sup>636</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.6-8, 27, 45, 100, 142; the ordinances are printed in Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, pp.312-316

From the lists of free sowers it is possible to identify some master tailors as significant employers. Richard Chubbe employed six different named free sowers in the 1490s and in two years he had two. Thomas Wryght, alias Isacke, employed three in 1520. These masters were prominent tailors and significant employers of labour. It is difficult to ascertain the number of free sowers who may have been employed by the tailors in the city at any one time, though in August 1480 there is a list of 14 of whom 12 paid 20d, one paid 12d and there was no payment recorded for the other.<sup>637</sup> Other surviving lists within the guild records contain no more than seven masters with their free sowers. Some free sowers advanced within the ranks of the Exeter guild but there are a number for whom this is the only record of their work which has been identified. They were clearly a recognisable part of the structure of the tailoring craft.

Tailors were referred to as employing servants and it is important to try to establish what role these men played in their businesses. The 1522 Military Survey gives us a further insight into the working households of the tailors. Within it the tailors John Bridgeman, Richard Chubbe and Thomas Isacke all have three servants listed. Hugh Davy, Walter Rondell and Henry Hamlyn have two and a further seven tailors have one. These are more likely to have been wage workers ('free sowers') than apprentices. A close study has been undertaken of the 20 tailors' servants in the 1522 Survey. Some of them appear named as wage workers a few years later in the 1524/25 lay subsidy and so this suggests that they were wage workers and not apprentices in 1522. Two of the tailors' servants listed in the 1522 Military Survey did move on to join the guild. Three other men of the same name as the servants were identified in the 1544 Exeter lay subsidy and one other as entering the freedom, but it cannot be substantiated if they are the same men.

Cornwall notes that 'in most returns the artisan element has to be inferred. The many tradesmen's servants noted at Coventry must, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, be assumed to have followed the same callings. Some must have been apprentices, of whom a good many were recorded in Exeter....'<sup>638</sup> He moves on to cite Richard Webber and John Townesen who are referred to

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<sup>637</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.142.

<sup>638</sup> Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, p.205.



as 'servants and apprentices to Richard Coke' in the 1522 Exeter return, though Cornwall also observes that their trade is not stated. Richard Coke was a fletcher.<sup>639</sup> A close examination of the tailors' servants listed in their households in the 1522 Military Survey suggests that in fact a number of them were wage workers who were still working for the same masters two years later. This adds weight to the notion that many tailors relied on extra wage labour in the operation of their businesses rather than taking on more apprentices.

In total 21 men are designated as apprentices within the survey but only a few of them were bound to tailors. John Bradmore had two apprentices listed and three other tailors had one each.<sup>640</sup> Master tailors' households can be clearly distinguished and they were fairly small and conformed to the guild ordinances in having a small number of apprentices in the 1520s.

### *Women in Tailoring*

In York, there were a number of seamstresses employed by the tailors but there are very few references to women within tailoring in Exeter.<sup>641</sup> An Exeter guild ordinance of the tailors' guild of 1531 did state that widows could 'kepe as many servaunts as they wille, to werke with hur use during hur widowhode and she bere scotte and lotte, yeve and yeld within the occupacion'.<sup>642</sup> The situation was similar in Bristol where the widow of a member of the guild could continue the craft during her widowhood though with only one journeyman and one apprentice.<sup>643</sup> This provides evidence that tailors' widows carried on the businesses of their husbands. John Lobdon in 1553 was bound as an apprentice to Richard Prouze and 'Rychard hys wyf' but this is the only occurrence of a tailors' wife having a part in any apprenticeships within the very few details of indentures which survive.<sup>644</sup> One instance is recorded concerning Agnes a widow, who, with Thomas Barrett and William Spencer, was involved in

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<sup>639</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, pp.71, 74.

<sup>640</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.18 and 20 gives Bradmore's apprentices. Most of the designated apprentices were resident in St Petrock and St Mary Arches. There was one each in St Pancras, Holy Trinity and St George.

<sup>641</sup> Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, pp.46, 170.

<sup>642</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.50; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.329.

<sup>643</sup> Fox, *Some Account*, pp.64-65.

<sup>644</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.28b.

the making of three pairs of hose in January 1572. They were fined 20 shillings and then given until the first Sunday in Lent to become members of the guild or leave the city. No specific woman guild member is recorded at all.<sup>645</sup> The only references to women being involved in the Tailors' guild are to Jenet Hamlyn, probably the widow of the prominent tailor John Hamlyn, mayor in 1468, who headed the lists of payments made for a priest between 1480 and 1482.<sup>646</sup> No seamstresses have been identified in the records.

### *The Tailors and Shop Fines*

Within the surviving lists of those paying shop fines 36 men were designated specifically as tailors (those actually referred to as 'tailor' in the text of the documents) and in total, from a comparison of the names with information collected from the tailors' guild records and other sources, 51 tailors are known to have been paying shop fines in the earlier part of the sixteenth century. Of these, 16 tailors were identified as later taking up the city freedom and 33 can also be traced as being members of the guild. Paying shop fines was a first step on the road to a successful business for some tailors, as nine of these shop fine payers who were included in the 1520 tailors' guild membership list moved on to become guild officials, three of them eventually serving as guild master. A further 10 appeared as shopholders on the 1520 list and two others are known to have established themselves as tailors in the city.<sup>647</sup>

It is possible to identify which parishes the shop fine paying tailors were living in by examining the city taxation records, particularly for the 1520s. This suggests that they were resident widely across the city within 13 of the parishes. Seven were living in St Mary Major, six in St Petrock, four in St Martin and three in St John. The first three were the parishes in which the tailors generally resided in the 1520s. It is, however, true that in the case of eight tailors paying shop fines these are the only references that have been found to them in the city records, so some men may have been less successful and moved elsewhere, tried another trade or worked as labourers.

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<sup>645</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.44a.

<sup>646</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.92-96.

<sup>647</sup> Figures calculated from *Exeter Freeman* and DHC, ECA, TAB IA.

It is possible to compare the tailors recorded as paying a shop fine in the city in 1522 with the Military Survey of that year to gain a snapshot of the less established tailors who had not entered the freedom at that time. We are therefore able to examine a group who were below the freemen in status providing a depth of insight that it is not possible for many towns. It is also feasible to build up a more detailed picture of some of these less prominent Exeter tailors by making further links with the lay subsidies, the tailors' guild records and other sources. Appendix 21 provides further details. In nearly all the cases where the level of the shop fines was given, they paid 4d or 8d. A few of these tailors were paying in kind in 1522, such as a pair of sleeves. Most of them were living in the central parishes of the city though a few were in the poorer parishes of Holy Trinity and St John. Most were assessed at a low level in 1522, between nil and 40s. However, this is not the case for all of them. Some of the shop fine-paying tailors in 1522 were working as servants for wealthy clients. John Keyth appears to have had an established business and been employing a servant and an apprentice. He was assessed on goods worth ten marks, a notable amount in 1522. He is not recorded as entering the freedom though he was working as a servant for Sir William Courtenay which could have provided him with his main employment.<sup>648</sup>

The Exeter tailors paying shop fines in 1522 included a few men who were on the margins of the trading community offering some rare insights into men who were not the subjects of Tudor censuses of the poor but just a little better off than them. Henry Burlace, (assessed on nil in 1522) was struggling to make his shop fine payments, mostly in kind, perhaps living in the shadow of more successful members of his family. Men like William Lesewyll (assessed on 20 shillings in 1522 survey and the 1524 subsidy) and Thomas Hawke (assessed on ten shillings in 1522 and nil in 1524) may not have been able to establish a shop successfully and were forced back into wage working a few years later.<sup>649</sup> Others within this group had been paying a shop fine for a decade before 1522 and were to make these payments for many years, such as Roger Wellydo (assessed on nil in 1522 and 20 shillings in 1524) who paid a shop fine from

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<sup>648</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.15.

<sup>649</sup> DHC, ECA, AB 1 ff.159b, 168a (Burlace), 170a; AB 1 f.181a; (Lesewyll); AB1 ff.160a, 167a, 170a, 172b (Hawke).

1515 to 1542, Thomas Carswyll (assessed on 40 shillings in 1524) who paid from 1515 to 1538 and John Purser (assessed on 40 shillings in 1522 and 1524) who paid from 1515 to 1535.<sup>650</sup> Tailors such as Wellydo (or Weldow) paid for nearly three decades and must never have accrued sufficient capital or standing to enter the city freedom but no doubt consistently made clothes for successive generations of Exeter families. Paying low shop fines over years may have been preferable for them than the £1 minimum entry fine to the freedom. Few of these men would have reached the £5 level of wealth suggested by Cornwall to indicate a master craftsmen.

The Tailors' guild records demonstrate that some of the men noted in 1522 were creating difficulties for the guild and this is perhaps an indication that they were struggling with their businesses. Arrears of money owed were demanded for abling by the guild from Ivo Codlyn, John Mutton and John Bartlet. 'Abling' was carried out at guild meetings when the prospective guild member was required to produce the relevant garments which he had made to test his capability and the quality of his workmanship was approved by two or four appointed 'ablers' or masters. John Smith was fined for non-attendance and as a surety for a freesower and had not paid his dues within the four days requested. John Bartlet also was in arrears in paying for a free sower and Thomas Carswyll was in arrears in his contributions towards the new hangings for the tailors' hall. Roger Welydo in 1525 was permitted by the guild to pay a small amount to them, possibly an indication of his difficult circumstances.<sup>651</sup>

Table 4.8 shows that the tailors often paid shop fines for just one or two years. It was thus perhaps a short term measure when they were establishing their businesses.

**TABLE 4.8 KNOWN TAILORS AND SHOP FINE PAYMENTS: NUMBER OF YEARS**

YEARS PAYING SHOP FINES	NUMBER OF TAILORS
1	23
2	8

<sup>650</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I ff.159a-194b; Book 156B ff.1-42; *Tudor Exeter*, pp, 13, 19, 22, 24, 39, 40.

<sup>651</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A ff .90, 103, 104, 107, 109, 122.

3	7
4	5
5	0
6	3
7	1
8	0
9	2
10 YEARS OR MORE	4

(Sources: DHC, ECA, AB I and Book 156b)

**TABLE 4.9 LEVEL OF FINES PAID MOST COMMONLY BY KNOWN TAILORS**

FINE PAID	NUMBER OF TAILORS
2d	3
4d	18
5d	1
6d	3
8d	9
10d	0
12d	1
16d	1
20d	1
UNKNOWN	16

(Sources: DHC, ECA, AB I and Book 156b)

As Table 4.9 shows commonly tailors paid 4d or 8d per year as their shop fine. Low fines of 2d were quite rare as often men paid in kind rather than a very low fine. The two men paying the minimum 2d included one tailor (an embroiderer) who paid for only one year. High payments were rarely levied on tailors. In the case of those paying 10d or more, three of them were aliens. A few men are recorded only as paying in kind such as the hosier John Maye junior who paid in three years a yard of kersey, a pair of hose cloth and a pair of hose. Sometimes men paid a higher amount in their initial year and then the amount was lowered, such as Ivo Codelyn, an alien hosier, who paid the large sum of 2s in the first year but then mostly 8d and once 12d in four subsequent years.<sup>652</sup> There is also an indication that bargains were reached with the city authorities whereby an amount of money was stated and then this was deleted in the document and a

<sup>652</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A ff.90, 101, 103, 104, 107, 109, 122.

payment in kind was agreed upon instead, such as by Henry Burlace who in 1516 provided a violet gown rather than a cash payment of 20d.<sup>653</sup>

### *The Draper-Tailors*

For most tailors of the time real wealth could only have been gained if they moved into cloth trading. Studies of tailors have concluded that their prosperity really came from cloth sales.<sup>654</sup> The Tailors' guild was concerned to prevent men from outside the city from selling cloth in Exeter, as is discussed below.

For Exeter two of the surviving aulnage accounts from the later 1470s have been compared with the names of the tailors from the earliest guild membership lists. Although Exeter men can clearly be identified, only seven of them were confirmed with certainty as members of the guild at the time.<sup>655</sup> The really successful tailors moved into overseas trading and had opportunities to do this in the boom decades of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries. This was the era of the Exeter tailor-merchants who can be seen trading in the extant customs accounts.

In Exeter there was also a group of prosperous tailors who could have been draper-tailors and some were extremely successful across much of the period studied. These were men whose work developed well beyond that of the tailoring craft. Drapers are generally seen as specialist cloth sellers who usually bought wholesale and sold mostly to the domestic market. Divisions between the work of tailors and drapers were often fairly narrow though drapers are usually seen as travelling more widely, being more involved in wholesale trading, and not primarily having an artisanal role. The Exeter tailors were far more adept in seizing the opportunities for diversification than their Worcester contemporaries.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>653</sup> DHC, ECA, AB 1 f.170a.

<sup>654</sup> Swanson, *Medieval Artisans*, p.48.

<sup>655</sup> TNA,E101/347/10, 347/11; also see 5.6.

<sup>656</sup> Dyer, *City of Worcester*, p.129.

In the whole of the period from 1470 to 1570 only two drapers are recorded as entering the freedom.<sup>657</sup> One draper was also listed as paying a shop fine.<sup>658</sup> No drapers are specifically recorded as following the trade when they entered the freedom for more than sixty years after 1514. In the 1570s and 80s only three drapers are listed entering the freedom and two of them were the apprentices of prominent members of the Tailors' guild. The work of the draper was very closely linked to that of the tailor in Exeter. The term 'draper' became more common in the 1590s when five are mentioned in the freemen's admissions. Only five Exeter drapers are identified in Common Pleas cases; three in the 1480s and the others in the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>659</sup>

In the earlier part of the period, however, some of Exeter's civic officials were referred to as drapers, in particular, John Ruer (or Rewer) receiver in 1481. In total over the years from 1470 to 1570, nine men designated as drapers attained significant civic office. The majority of these were in the latter half of the period and mostly from the 1550s and 1560s and one attained the mayoralty finally in the 1570s. These men are referred to variously in the records. In the later fifteenth century there are just references to being a 'draper' but by the 1520s John Bridgeman had become at times a tailor, a draper and a merchant and in the case of Griffin Ameredith and Edward Bridgeman by the 1550s and 60s they were both described as a tailor, a draper and a gentleman. Ameredith was also referred to in Common Pleas as a merchant tailor, which is a very rarely used term for the Exeter men.<sup>660</sup>

The question of the drapers is further confused by some possible movements between tailoring and drapery. The merchants, in their arguments in 1559, made reference to Griffin Ameredith having moved from being a tailor to a draper and Thomas Hunt who had taken on tailoring after having been a draper. The implication was that they did not consistently maintain working lives as

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<sup>657</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, pp.57, 66. William Wichals, who became a freeman as the apprentice of John Ruer in 1473, and John Smyth, who entered the city freedom in 1514, paying the standard fine of £1, are recorded.

<sup>658</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I f.159b.

<sup>659</sup> TNA, CP 40/ 841, 888, 1084, 1120, 1157: Stephen Colbeare in 1472, John Ruer in 1484, Philip Well (Atwell) in 1484, Thomas Hunte in 1535, John Tuckfield in 1544 and Henry Bette in 1554.

<sup>660</sup> TNA, CP40/1116.

tailors. Ameredith was a Welshman and before coming to Exeter he had served as a soldier. He entered the city freedom as a tailor in 1527/28.<sup>661</sup> Hooker also tells us that 'he followed his occupacion verie diligentllye and carefully wherein he made the more proffite ...'<sup>662</sup> He became master of the guild twice, in 1536 and 1542. His involvement with the guild was a long one as in 1530 he was in a dispute that was settled with Nicholas Stranger and in 1557, a few months before his death, he heads a list in the Tailors' Act Book of 'late masters of the same craft' levying a fine upon John Dyble.<sup>663</sup> Two of Ameredith's apprentices entered the freedom in 1548, suggesting that his business continued for more than two decades. The Tailors' Act Book evidences his long and active involvement in guild meetings and affairs.<sup>664</sup> Hooker tells us that Ameredith 'grewe to good welthe and habilite and then by lytle and lytle he gave over his manuall occupation and became to be a draper wich was verie profitable unto hym'.<sup>665</sup> There is no reference to Ameredith within the extant customs accounts as an overseas or coastal trader. He kept a close association with some of the Exeter tailors up to the end of his life and in his will bequeathed 40 shillings to his godson John, the son of William Lant the Exeter tailor.<sup>666</sup>

Overall the occupation of draper in Exeter may have been one that individuals moved into from a more artisanal background rather than one they entered at the outset of their working lives. Their prosperity rested on their access to a significant share in the wholesale trade and they may have had to acquire larger amounts of capital to be able to achieve this. Some prosperous drapers were wealthy such as Griffin Ameredith who left cash bequests in his will totalling £367.<sup>667</sup> In the late-fifteenth century some drapers, such as John Taylor, were involved in overseas trade but by the sixteenth century there is only limited evidence of their participation.<sup>668</sup> A few drapers were able reach high civic

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<sup>661</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.71.

<sup>662</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.352a.

<sup>663</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB, IA f.131, TAB 1f 24a. Ameredith's burial is recorded in St Petrock on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1557: DHC, Exeter St Petrock PR1.

<sup>664</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1 ff.1a, 2a, 3a, 5b, 11a, 18a; *Exeter Freeman*, p.77.

<sup>665</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.352a.

<sup>666</sup> TNA, Prob 11/41/70.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.* See Appendix 15.

<sup>668</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 10/11, 13/14, 17/18 Edward IV; TNA E122/42/1, 42/8, 42/9, 42/11, 45/12A, 45/12B; E190 926/1, 927/7. John Taylor was designated as a draper in the customs accounts on twenty two occasions in the 1470s. He is distinguished from others of the same name in the



office but not the mayoralty.<sup>669</sup> The drapers were not distinct or successful as an occupational group in Exeter but rather as individual figures. Drapers battling against difficult circumstances were known in other English towns at the time such as in York where there was the same picture of mixed fortunes for the drapers as a group in the sixteenth century.<sup>670</sup>

## 4.2 The Tailors' Guild

### *The Structure of the Guild*

The guild elite was composed of the masters and the master wardens, past and present. From at least 1482 the guild was governed by a master, a master warden (or chief warden) and three single wardens (or under wardens) who were elected annually on Midsummer Day. Earlier in 1478 there was a master and three wardens and by 1481 this had become a master and four wardens. From 1482 the guild's chief officers remained in the same form.<sup>671</sup> They were allowed to wear the guild livery, which distinguished them from the shopholders, who made up the body of the guild. After a man had progressed from being master of the guild he was admitted to its common council, a supervisory body which made the ordinances and could discipline the current officials. This council was also referred to as the 'eight men' and was limited to the eight most senior members of the guild. The system was gerontocratic. In 1559 John May denied that he was 'the ancient of the house' in that he was 'not as old as Master Ripplye' <sup>672</sup> illustrating the importance of age in guild decision making.

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Town Customs. Taylor the draper was trading in wine and iron alongside cloth. Thomas Hunt in the 1520s was importing crest cloth, canvas and skins. John Pyll was exporting and importing cloth in the early part of Elizabeth's reign.

<sup>669</sup> In particular John Ruer (or Rewer), receiver in 1481, and Robert Bonyfant, who reached the receivership in 1505. In total over the years from 1470 to 1570, nine men designated as drapers attained significant civic office. The majority of these were in the latter half of the period and mostly from the 1550s and 1560s and one attained the mayoralty in the 1570s.

<sup>670</sup> Sheils, 'Company', p53; Swanson, *Medieval Artisans* pp, 32, 49, 57-58, 67. In York the drapers reached a low point in their fortunes in the late fifteenth century, when some of them joined the mercers' guild and others became associated with the tailors. In 1551 they amalgamated with the tailors. Later in the sixteenth century some York drapers were more prosperous and dominated office in the amalgamated guild.

<sup>671</sup> DHC ECA TAB IA ff.3, 91.

<sup>672</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185 no.10.

There was also within the guild a group of junior members or 'bachelors' who are far less documented. The whole guild was thus composed of the common council, the master and wardens, the shopholders, the bachelors, the apprentices and the journeymen (or free sowers).

### *The Tailors' Hall and Property*

The tailors had a fixed meeting place from at least 1478. In 1521 William Trygges of Stoke Canon paid a debt (due seven years previously) 'to the beldyng of the taylors hall and the parlor', indicating a new building.<sup>673</sup> In the early sixteenth century their hall was in St Paul as in the 1544 lay subsidy the fraternity was assessed on £14 worth of goods there.<sup>674</sup> The tailors' hall was also used as a dwelling house. The first copy of a lease occurs in the minute books in 1541 when it was agreed that John Stevyns was to pay 26s 8d per annum for four years plus 6s 8d for the 'rerages' of William Hurst 'sometym dwellyn in the sayd house'.<sup>675</sup> Further leases were made in 1582, 1589 and 1590. The tailors reserved the hall and other rooms for their own use when they were required.<sup>676</sup> Hooker noted (in 1579) that the heirs of the Waldron family had a tenement in St Paul Street, for which they paid 2s, which the corporation of tailors held and that it was called the Tailor's Hall.<sup>677</sup> By 1604 it was agreed that a new guild hall should be built 'in and upon their lande leinge within the parishe of Sainte Paule' and by 1610 the new guild hall was finished.<sup>678</sup> The tailors' hall was probably in the part of Goldsmith Street which was within St Paul.<sup>679</sup> The tailors retained a hall in St Paul's parish for the rest of their history, though it may have been in different locations.

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<sup>673</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.107.

<sup>674</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.53.

<sup>675</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.6b.

<sup>676</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I ff.57b, 65a, 67b, 69b.

<sup>677</sup> Harte et al., *Description*, Vol. III p.697.

<sup>678</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB II

<sup>679</sup> P. Thomas and J. Ward, *Aspects of Exeter: A Photographic Chronicle of Change*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Tiverton, 2006. Here it is noted that the Exeter Company of Goldsmiths and Silversmiths held their first meeting at the Taylors' Hall in Goldsmith Street in 1701. In 1825 the tailors' hall was noted as being in Goldsmith Street and that they held several houses adjacent to it in the parish of St Paul: *The Report of the Commissioners concerning Charities; containing that part which relates to the City of Exeter*, Exeter, 1825, pp.272-273.

An inventory of the first known Tailors' Hall survives from 1504 which gives us an idea of its structure.<sup>680</sup> It comprised a hall, a parlour, a 'spence' (buttery) and two chambers, one next to the hall and one described as the outer chamber. Gifts of furniture for the hall were made in 1478, suggesting that it was relatively new then.<sup>681</sup> Its furniture and furnishings were listed in 1504.<sup>682</sup> Many of those making donations were from the prominent families involved in the trade in the 1470s and 80s. Five women were listed making gifts.<sup>683</sup> 'Sir' Bartolome Thomas had donated a mass book and two cruets of silver by 1478; possibly he was a priest associated with the guild.<sup>684</sup> The 1504 inventory includes some of the same goods that were donated earlier but also informs us that there were a range of other guild possessions.<sup>685</sup> The tailors had a streamer and a banner for ceremonial occasions. The munificence of the members was evident again in 1521 when they purchased hangings for the hall<sup>686</sup> and in 1528 Nicholas Abell was paid £3 13s 4d for 'stayning a clothe a boutte a parler yn the taylers hall and payntyng the recesse of the same parler'.<sup>687</sup>

Our knowledge of the rest of the guild's property is limited as there is no extant collection of deeds. However, by 1478 Walter Gervys had enfeoffed the guild with a meadow worth 13s 4d per annum, but its location is unknown. The guild was also enfeoffed with land upon Strypcote Hill (Stepcote Hill) and in 1482 received a close of land in Tadyford, St David, from John Hamlyn and his wife.<sup>688</sup> No other details of the guild property in the period studied have been

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<sup>680</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.41; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.327.

<sup>681</sup> DHC, ECA TAB IA f.57; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.320.

<sup>682</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA I f.41. Furniture included a coffer, table boards, chairs, planks, benches, trestles and forms. There were also painted cloths, a spear, torches, a towel and chains for a book a stag's head (a 'hertes hed'), a furred gown, a pen and inkhorn, a salt cellar, two silver cruets, and a large brass crock. A mass book was also given as well as a black buckskin for covering it. More mundane items included a pair of pincers and some 'raylis for the halle'.

<sup>683</sup> Jenet Hamlyn, Deonyse Spyne, Ysabell Rowse, Annse Evelyng, Margaret Chester and Maute (Maud) Kent.

<sup>684</sup> The 1478 list of gifts is printed in Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.320; DHC, ECA, TAB IA f. 57. 'Sir' is used in other cases to denote clergymen in the Exeter records and often denotes a university education.

<sup>685</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.41: 'ii lytell bynches by every side on the chimney on nailed to the walle'. There was a bedstead in the parlour and in the outer chamber and a table plank and two shelves in the spence. In the chamber next to the hall there was a large coffer which does not seem to have had any locks or keys.

<sup>686</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.109.

<sup>687</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.129.

<sup>688</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.143.

discovered, although we do know that in 1572 Robert Toker and his wife Joan granted it a lease of their house, possibly in St Mary Major.<sup>689</sup>

### *Tailors' Guild Officials and Meetings*

A beadle was employed by the guild from about 1520. He was paid 3s 4d per annum or 10d each quarter. His duties included the summoning of the members, a weekly search for offences, and the distribution of canon bread to the guild elite at Christmas.<sup>690</sup> The job was not always easy to conduct. In 1560 the beadle was sent on two occasions to summon Ranulph Henson to the hall but he refused to come and 'was playing at boylls (bowls) yn Mr Bucknames gardyn'.<sup>691</sup> The earliest reference to a permanent clerk being employed by the guild occurs in 1550. Henry Toner was the clerk from then until at least 1563.<sup>692</sup>

The earliest guild ordinances specify that meetings were to be held weekly but by Elizabeth's reign they had become monthly, which might indicate a decline in their significance. By the later sixteenth century they were usually called 'hall days'. More important were the four 'quarter days' when all the craft assembled at the hall for a breakfast provided by the shopholders and the ordinances and oaths of the guild were read and affirmed, debts collected and payment made. After the meal the free sowers were granted the remains of the feast, an indication of their status. An election dinner was also held by the guild and contributions to this were graduated according to the rank of the member.

### *The Social and Religious Role of the Tailors' Guild*

The early Tailors' guild had an important social and religious role for its members. In Exeter it was also the Fraternity of St John the Baptist. A number of tailors' guilds were dedicated to St John the Baptist such as those in London, York and Bristol. The Exeter guild's fifteenth century silver seal-die survives. It

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<sup>689</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.13, 144; TAB I f.45a.

<sup>690</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f. 14a.

<sup>691</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.28a.

<sup>692</sup> He had been made a city freeman in 1541. In 1550 he was paid 6s 8d per annum plus 4d for every freeman 'abled' and 2d for every fine levied. In 1556 his annual salary was raised to 10s and by 1563 he was earning an additional shilling from the admittance of every man abled and 6d for every fine implemented.

depicts St John the Baptist in his camel skin with the Agnus Dei on his shoulder flanked by two pairs of tailors' shears. The seal-die has been dated to about 1475 but as it was granted to the guild in their letters patent it can be more correctly dated to the late 1460s.<sup>693</sup> The Exeter tailors do not seem to have possessed a chapel of their own like the cordwainers or the weavers and tuckers. They may have used their hall as a chapel. Their fraternity was not noted by the chantry surveyors in 1546 or 1548 which leads us to suppose that the tailors may have abandoned any use of a chapel in favour of a more secular guise by that time. The guild had passed ordinances to provide for the payment of a priest as early as 1480. For the next seven years the guild officials were required to contribute 1s a year, the shopholders 8d and the journeymen 4d. Lists of contributors towards the priest's stipend survive for the following two years. Payments were made at the quarter days. Between 28 and 31 shopholders and 16 and 18 journeymen appear as donors.<sup>694</sup> If a priest was appointed no record of his identity has survived.

In 1482 a bond was made with St Nicholas Priory by which the tailors agreed to pay £20 to the Prior as a surety that they would hold an obit for John Hamlyn, a tailor and mayor in 1468/69, and his wife Johan (Joan) in St Nicholas Priory with dirges and a requiem mass to be said by the Prior and five monks. The Prior was to be paid out of the annual profits of the close of land in Tadyford. The guild also made an annual offering to its patron saint on St John's day and in 1520 a number of members were fined for not attending.<sup>695</sup> After the Reformation most of the ritual was subsumed in the annual guild feasts and the Midsummer musters.

### *The Tailors' Dispute*

The tailors developed some guild organisation in the early 1460s as in 1466 they took a far-reaching step in obtaining letters patent directly from the King which made them a body corporate, thus acting completely independent of the city council. What prompted this action is unknown but it is possible that some

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<sup>693</sup> B.L.Additional Seals CLI, 41; A.B. Tonnochy, *Catalogue of British Seal-Dies in the British Museum*, 1952, pp.liii, 28.

<sup>694</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A ff.9-10, 92-96.

<sup>695</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A ff.102, 104-105.

dispute had occurred and the tailors decided to exert their power. Green identified that in 1461 they acquired the power to enrol artisans from other crafts in their organisation, thus presenting a challenge to the mercantile elite. However, there is no real evidence in the city records that they tried to exert their power over other crafts.<sup>696</sup> Kleineke has shown that there were a series of disputes between the civic authorities and the guilds in the earlier fifteenth century: with the skimmers in 1414, the bakers in 1428 and with the commons more generally in the civil wars of the 1450s. The tailors' resistance to the city council, culminating in its crushing in 1475, has been seen by Kleineke as 'strident' in his study of civic ritual.<sup>697</sup>

Possibly in the later fifteenth century they were stronger than they were ever to be again. It has been suggested that they formed a Yorkist faction in Exeter which sought recognition from Edward IV against the Lancastrian sympathies of the civic elite.<sup>698</sup> This is doubtful. Kleineke's investigation of Exeter's position in the War of the Roses has concluded that the city's attitude throughout the whole period was 'pragmatic' making 'every effort to be associated with the lawful monarch of the day....the citizens carefully avoided siding with any of the rival magnates'.<sup>699</sup> Kermode has identified a situation in York, Beverley and Hull in the late fifteenth century when economic recession may have fuelled opposition to the city government and in York, at least, craft guilds were at the forefront of opposition which carried on in the first two decades of the sixteenth century.<sup>700</sup> The Exeter opposition was different as this was a time of growing economic strength in the city, not recession. The extent of it may have been exaggerated especially by historians who have accepted the emphasis which Green placed on its ability to recruit members from other crafts.

Their dispute with the city authorities did, however, continue for some years. By 1476 the representatives of the merchants, John Atwill and the customs official

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<sup>696</sup> Green, *Town Life*, Vol. II, pp.174-177.

<sup>697</sup> H. Kleineke, 'Civic Ritual, Spaces and Conflict in Fifteenth-Century Exeter', in F. Andrews, ed., *Harlaxton Medieval Studies*, 21, 2011, p.178 and n.42.

<sup>698</sup> Green, *Town Life*, p.173.

<sup>699</sup> Kleineke, "'Kynges Cite'", p.156.

<sup>700</sup> J. Kermode, 'Obvious Observations on the Formation of Oligarchies in Late Medieval Towns' in J.A. Thomson, ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, Gloucester, 1988, pp.100-101.

Thomas Elyot, were undertaking proceedings against the Exeter tailors in London. In Exeter actions were taken against a number of tailors. At least 16 of them were disenfranchised in October 1476.<sup>701</sup> They were the leaders of the Tailors' guild, half of them being guild officials between 1478 and 1482.<sup>702</sup> John Hamlyn and Richard Ronnewyll were eminent citizens who had their allowances of canon bread suspended. Hamlyn had been mayor in 1468/69 and Ronnewyll mayor in 1473/74, thus illustrating the civic power of the tailors. In addition a group of shopholder tailors renounced their charter, probably under pressure from the merchants. Investigation of the Star Chamber court records has yielded some more evidence on this. A case was brought against the tailors' guild, probably in 1478, for alleged riot and the intimidation of Thomas Davy and Richard Longe, tailors, who were perhaps in the pocket of the merchants.<sup>703</sup> In February 1477 the King had, however, upheld the rights of the tailors and by September their leaders had been admitted back to the franchise. The merchants stubbornly refused to tolerate this kind of independence within the city and, having raised over £50 to annul the tailors' charter, finally succeeded in doing so in 1482. The tailors never really accepted the final decision and continued to act as a corporate body. They succeeded in having their charter renewed in 1510, 1547, 1555 and 1580 and a grant of arms in 1564.<sup>704</sup> They were to play a major part in the struggle against the Merchant Adventurers' charter in 1558 and 1559 although by that time they had lost some civic influence as the gap in wealth between the merchant elite and the town craftsmen had grown considerably.

### *The Activities of the Tailors' Guild*

Table 4.10 provides an analysis of the recorded business of the tailors' guild meetings contained in their Act Book from 1558 to 1570. The years have been selected because they provide a direct comparison with those analysed for the newly-founded Merchants' Company. At this time the tailors' meeting records

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<sup>701</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 55 ff. 53-54; *Exeter Freeman*, p.387.

<sup>702</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 55 ff.53-54; DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff. 3, 91.

<sup>703</sup> TNA, STAC2/26/393. This document can be internally dated to 1478 from the named master of the guild in that year.

<sup>704</sup> DHC, ECA, Exeter Tailors' Records.

are also fuller than earlier and so more substantial insights may be gained into their meetings.

**TABLE 4.10: BUSINESS CONDUCTED AT MEETINGS OF THE TAILORS' GUILD 1558-1570**

NATURE OF BUSINESS	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES
'ABLING' OF NEW MEMBERS OF GUILD	43
WORKING IN THE CITY 'UNABLED'	24
FINES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS	14
NEW GUILD MASTERS AND WARDENS	13
'MISBEHAVIOUR' OF MEMBERS	7
TAKING ON SERVANTS WITHOUT LICENCE	3
NEW REGULATIONS AND ORDINANCES	2
DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF MEMBERS	2
GIFTS AND LEGACIES TO THE GUILD	2
APPRENTICESHIP INDENTURES	2
LISTINGS OF FULL GUILD MEMBERSHIP	2
ADMISSION AS 'CONTRIBUTOR'/SHOPHOLDER	2
RECEIVED 'STUFF' AND NON-DELIVERY OF GOODS	2
RETAINING A 'FOREIGNER'	1
NON-APPEARANCE OF 'ABLERS'	1
GUILD CLERK'S FEES	1
DEPARTURE FROM MEETING WITHOUT LICENCE	1
REFUSAL TO TAKE OATH AS SINGLE WARDEN	1
MIDSUMMER WATCH	1
NON-MEMBER'S WILL	1
MAKING APPAREL NOT 'ABLED' FOR	1
MASTER AND WARDENS TAKING OATHS	1

(Source: DHC, ECA, TAB 1)

It is evident from Table 4.10 that the largest amount of their recorded activity involved the admission of members and their 'abling' within the craft. The 'abling' was also very much concerned with ensuring and maintaining the standards of workmanship and reputation of the Exeter tailors. The regulation and protection of their craft was by far their major concern. Preventing tailors who had not been 'abled', and so were not members of their guild, from working within the city was their next major concern. These economic controls were by



far the largest element of guild business though control of their members was also important, especially trying to ensure that they attended the guild meetings. Business concerning the annual appointment of new guild masters and wardens, approving new ordinances, and listing guild membership was also important. The guild was showing concern for the conduct of its members, especially socially, in regulating what it termed 'misbehaviour', usually inappropriate language and insults being used but sometimes violent actions. Economic offences were also dealt with such as disputes between masters concerning workers or apprentices or disputes with customers. The overwhelming impression, however, is that in guild meetings in the years from 1558 to 1570 little attention was devoted to its social or charitable activities.

The tailors' records contain a variety of information. In some instances they show that men were admitted specifically only as a hosier or in one instance, in 1558 as a jerkin maker. Some recording of the names of masters as well as the apprentices admitted occurs but this is fairly limited. The tailors noted when new members were denizens such as Sandy Napper, an alien denizen in June 1541 and John Nycolas, a denizen, in 1543.<sup>705</sup> A few instances also occur where tailors were licensed by the guild to keep a shop and to pay quarterly for this privilege such as Matthew Raynold, paying 4 shillings per year quarterly in 1555 and Robert Davye in 1561. This was occurring at a time when the lists of shop fine payers are not extant. From April 1564 the payment of a silver spoon weighing one ounce was recorded for some of those admitted to the guild who were apprentices in the city and the name of their master was also noted in those instances. The payment of a fine in addition was not recorded. This was the case for hosiers as well as tailors. This was possibly a means of favouring and acknowledging those who had been trained in their craft within the city. The payment of a silver spoon had been part of the late-fifteenth century regulations but little reference to actual payments of these occurs in the record for that era. There is hardly any information on the birthplace of new guild members an exception being John Uppecote, admitted in 1524, who is noted as having been born at King's Nympton (4 miles from South Molton in North Devon).<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1 ff.5, 6.

<sup>706</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.57.

The general standard of workmanship within the craft was a prime issue. All potential guild members were tested for their competence by two men who were appointed as 'ablers', and took an oath to ensure their impartiality. This duty was performed at guild meetings. In 1562 Thomas Rychardson and John Smyth were both fined 16d each for failing to attend to able Thomas Boys but this was an unusual instance of such a failure to perform guild duties.<sup>707</sup> The tailors expressed a concern in their activities for the quality of their products and the reputation of their guild and its members. By the later-sixteenth century men seem to have been operating in one of the trades for which they had not been originally abled and this was acted against by the guild. Some faced fairly low fines for this offence such as John Stephyn, a hosier, who had tried to widen the scope of his work beyond hosiery in 1555 and was fined 6d. However, he appears again in a list of craftsmen fined for making garments which they had not been abled to produce, in February 1557.<sup>708</sup> Others faced fines for making men's garments, women's garments and a gentlewoman's cloak for which they were not abled. Tailors faced complaints that they had made up garments but kept some of the customer's cloth for themselves such as in February 1565 when David Wyndytt was accused of taking cloth and six shillings from John Maynewaryng, a gentleman, and cloth from William Fortescue esquire, for making doublets but he had not completed the agreed work.<sup>709</sup> Tailors were also fined for making defective goods such as William Spicer in 1481 who was found to have sowed a kirtle without sleeves and 'for the stuffe of a coler, and setting on'.<sup>710</sup> This type of regulation continued to be enforced by the guild throughout the period.

In a few instances tailors were re-abled by the guild to be able to work on a wider range of goods. Richard Ryght was abled for a second time in August 1558 paying 10 shillings so that he could make much more than the coats, hose and women's petticoats for which he was first approved. Thomas Boyes or Bowyes had originally been abled to make all women's garments in November 1561 but less than two years later he was abled for a second time to produce all menswear except hose. There are a few other instances which occur right at

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<sup>707</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.30b.

<sup>708</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I ff.21a, 23b, 61a-b.

<sup>709</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.34b.

<sup>710</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A f.5; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.322.

the end of the period studied. No evidence of re-abling occurs earlier so perhaps some tailors were becoming more concerned about the scope of their businesses indicating a time of increased competition and pressure by the mid-sixteenth century.

However, it was a much more major concern of the tailors to prevent workers from carrying out tailoring business on their own account in private houses in the city without having been licensed by the guild. This offence was the most common one to come before the guild officials in the sixteenth century. There are a range of offences recorded across the period. In 1516 John Lend 'beyng a brytteyn' (Breton) was accused of 'workyn prevyly in mens howsys and occapyng the occupacyon of taillers in Exceter'. He remained imprisoned for two days and nights, confessed to his guilt and paid a 20d fine. His servant Rowland Fuffentor was fined 16d and was given the ultimatum of becoming a servant in the occupation or leaving the city.<sup>711</sup> Migrants from other countries were also working within tailoring in Exeter and causing concern for the guild. In June 1521 'John a dochman' was listed in a group of free sowers as servants of Thomas Wryght. Wryght had to agree 'that yef on John a dochman (listed a second time) do woarke with hym after sonday next then he ys scewrte (surety) for hys fresoyng 20d'.<sup>712</sup> Lists of free sowers were included in the records in the 1490s and 1500s particularly but they do not contain any other instances like this. The Tailors' guild provides the strongest evidence of anti-alien feeling in Exeter.<sup>713</sup>

Some men from the immediate surrounding area were also accused of working in tailoring in the city when they had not been abled by the guild to do so such as Thomas Maior of Topsham in 1565, Thomas Peke of Broadclyst in 1567 and John Skere of Heavitree in 1569.<sup>714</sup> Guild regulations were reiterated vigorously in 1556 when it was stated that they should 'make no other garnements then they were abled for upon payne of a grevos fine upon evry offendor for evry offence which ys 20 shillings'.<sup>715</sup> This gives us a good indication of how difficult

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<sup>711</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.83a.

<sup>712</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.55.

<sup>713</sup> See 2.2.

<sup>714</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I ff. 35a, 36b, 38b.

<sup>715</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.23a.

the situation had perhaps become for the guild to manage and maintain. These offences were a significant preoccupation for the tailors in their guild business.

Problems existed with the admission of men from outside Exeter to the guild William Trygges from Stoke Canon (four miles north of Exeter) had difficulty in proving his right to be a shopholder in 1520. He was required to show the guild officials 'the wrytyng whereby the sayd treges ded klame hys fredome of and yn the sayd craft withyn the sayd cete' but it appears that "he had no wrytyng to show...." Trygges appeared before the guild on three occasions and paid 10 shillings for his freedom 'yn thes kraft' as well as having made a payment of earlier debts towards the building of the Tailors' Hall.<sup>716</sup> He was an influential tailor who appears to have worked in the craft in the city but also maintained an economic life outside it too. A William Trygges appears as a resident in Stoke Canon paying on goods worth £20 in 1525.<sup>717</sup> Trygges created further problems in the city and was brought before the city council and disenfranchised for not residing in the city and not keeping watch and ward in 1524.<sup>718</sup> However, in 1525 and 1526 he served as single warden of the Tailors' guild and became its master warden in 1527.<sup>719</sup> The Trygges family was continually to be problematical for the city authorities.<sup>720</sup>

The supervision of apprentices and the protection of the interests of both the master and the servant were key concerns for the Exeter guilds. Important national legislation was passed regarding this in 1531 and 1537.<sup>721</sup> The guild dealt with apprenticeship disputes. Provision was made by the guild for the transfer of an apprentice to a new master if his employer should die, the exchange being supervised by them. Disputes occurred concerning the movement of an apprentice from one master to another.<sup>722</sup> As the business of the tailors expanded in the middle years of the sixteenth century the guild was no doubt facing increasing difficulties in trying to maintain their regulations.

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<sup>716</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.103, 104, 107.

<sup>717</sup> Stoate, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*, p.70.

<sup>718</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I f.104b.

<sup>719</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.124, 126, 128.

<sup>720</sup> DHC, ECA, MCR 7/8 Eliz. I.; CWA St Petrock, Exe Bridge Account Rolls, TAB I ff. 12a, 13a, 14b, 18a, 22a, 31b TNA, C3/37/33; C1/1429/61-63.

<sup>721</sup> G. Eyre and A. Strahan, ed. *Statutes of the Realm*, 11 volumes, Record Commissioners, London, 1810-1828, Vol. III, p.321 (22 Henry VIII c.4) and pp.654-655 (28 Henry VIII c.5).

<sup>722</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I ff. 35b, 38a.

Demarcation was another issue but this was of relatively minor importance in Exeter overall and only really concerned some disputes with the leather jerkin makers as discussed above. Apart from the hosiers and drapers the Tailors' guild did not contain craftsmen from any other occupation.

There were other types of economic regulation the Tailors' guild was concerned with. The retailing of cloth by those outside the guild was a problem for them. A local seller from Whimble was sanctioned in 1519.<sup>723</sup> Cloth retailers from further afield were also acted against such as two Welshmen fined 12d for selling plain whites in the city in 1542 and Roger Hyckes, a tailor from Cranborne in Kent, fined 2s 4d for working and selling cloth in Exeter in 1555.<sup>724</sup> Some craftsmen took tailoring work outside the city precincts. John Kent in October 1522 agreed to bring Thomas Moys before the guild for 'feychyng of worke out of the cete of Exceter'.<sup>725</sup>

There are very few complaints about wages in the extant records from the tailors' guild. One rare instance concerns John Ragland in 1520 who 'complanyd a pon hys Mr Thomas Wryght for his wage'. Wright was ordered to pay 'and that was proved bout viij d'. This was more likely to have been a dispute concerning arrears of wages for a journeyman worker than any dispute concerning the level of them.<sup>726</sup>

The guild was also concerned with the discipline of its members. Issues of social regulation however, appear much less frequently in the records of the Tailors' guild than matters of economic control overall. Conduct was a concern from the time of the earliest extant guild records such as in October 1482 when there was an ongoing dispute between John Brendon the younger and John Matthu which had to be settled at the guild though 'sertayne language' was used and Brendon was found guilty of perjury and was ordered to make some restitution.<sup>727</sup> In the early years of Elizabeth I's reign language was still an issue for the guild such as in July 1565 when Richard Bawdon and John Wels were

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<sup>723</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.100.

<sup>724</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I ff.7b, 20a.

<sup>725</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.137.

<sup>726</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f. 102.

<sup>727</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.11; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.323.

fined for insulting fellow members saying 'ye lye' and that another was a 'vyllayne and scalde knave'.<sup>728</sup>

The guild punished its members to try to improve their conduct. In 1481 they had put John Tregaso in the stocks for a day and a night as he had refused to attend and take part in the guild's activities.<sup>729</sup> Misbehaviour was a common term used to describe offences, though in 1561 more detail was evident in the dispute between Richard Fysshe and John Moye when terms such as 'molest,' 'unquiet' or 'misuse' occur. Richard Fysshe was fined ten shillings and if either were found guilty of further offences towards each other they could pay a £5 fine to the guild and face possible imprisonment.<sup>730</sup> The amounts of money involved indicate the seriousness with which instances of unruly conduct could be taken by the guild. In 1549, the year of the Western Rebellion, a tumultuous year for Exeter, the guild was concerning itself with social regulation. In February the tailors imposed an act which included the reassertion of punishment for freemen tailors who enticed away the servants of others and against unlawful games.<sup>731</sup> In the aftermath of rebellion in October members of the tailors' guild were warned that they must take people into their service for a minimum of three months or pay a heavy fine. Also a curfew was imposed as servants and apprentices were not to leave their master's house after the ringing of the bell unless they were carrying a light, nor in the morning before the bell was rung nor leave their master's house without explanation. Masters could also face a fine for failing to keep their servants under their control.<sup>732</sup> Fines were often levied on guild members for riotous behaviour after the midsummer celebrations in the city. The guild was thus responsible for the social conduct of its members though there is not much evidence to suggest that this became more rigorous as time progressed.

The guild also acted as a protection for its members. If a member fell into economic distress but had 'don hys dewteys well and trewly to the fraternyte' he

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<sup>728</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.36b.

<sup>729</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.12; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.323.

<sup>730</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.30a.

<sup>731</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.14a.

<sup>732</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I ff.14a-15a.

received 10d a week in alms and 14d if he had been a master of the guild.<sup>733</sup> The Exeter tailors' charity was largely confined to its own members in contrast to that of the Merchants' Company. An exception was Griffin Ameredith who left money for shrouds for prisoners executed at Ringswell, just outside the city, and for the maintenance of the site.<sup>734</sup> On his death a member was expected to bequeath a legacy to the guild. Few tailors' wills survive. John Bridgeman, master in 1515 and 1519, left a legacy of 20s to the guild in 1523.<sup>735</sup> William Lant, master in 1558 and 1564, left a pair of harness and the rest of his part of his goods, after legacies, to the tailors on his death in 1569.<sup>736</sup> Other tailors left no legacies to the guild.<sup>737</sup> Some Exeter tailors were wealthy and commissioned items from local goldsmiths. John Tuckfield in 1554 left a gilt standing cup with a cover which had a tailor's shears on it, the emblem of his trade.<sup>738</sup>

The will of Elizabeth Bucknam, widow of William Bucknam, an Exeter mercer and merchant, was copied in the guild's Act Book. In the will, dated May 1567, it is also stated that the tailors were to see the will carried out by the city council and she bequeathed the guild 20 shillings for this. John Martyn, a tailor, was appointed as one of her executors but there is no other mention of the tailors in the will.<sup>739</sup> The guild was being seen as an established organisation which could help prominent Exeter citizens.

We have evidence that the Exeter guild members knew of some of the proceedings of the guilds in Bristol from an entry in the Exeter Tailors' Book which records 'The order how every Comp in Bristoll ranck themselves before their Maior', where the Bristol guilds are listed in order. The entry is undated

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<sup>733</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.56; Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p.319.

<sup>734</sup> TNA, Prob 11/41/70. Ameredith bequeathed the profits, worth 38s per annum from lands he held in Sidford, Sidbury and Salcombe to the city council to purchase the shrouds and also for the maintenance of the wall there and for a chapel, if one was built.

<sup>735</sup> TNA Prob 11/21/17.

<sup>736</sup> DHC, ECA, Exeter Orphans Court inventory no.13.

<sup>737</sup> Thomas Hunte in 1548, Griffin Ameredith in 1556 and Henry Harris in 1559. TNA, Prob 11/32/11; 11/41/70; 11/43/3.

<sup>738</sup> TNA, Prob 11/39/27.

<sup>739</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.40b; DHC Exeter Holy Trinity PFW12. Joan Tuckfield made similar provisions in her will, made in 1568 and proved in 1573, stating that members of the city council, the Tailors' guild and the Merchants' Company were to meet annually to ensure that funds from the revolving loan she endowed were properly collected. This is discussed in Evans, 'Echo', p.423.

but seems to derive from the latter part of the reign of Edward IV.<sup>740</sup> There were differences such as in Bristol one man was not allowed to make any new clothes by the guild but only to mend old ones, which has no parallel in Exeter.<sup>741</sup>

The Tailors' guild dominated the Exeter clothing trades. This impression may be distorted due to the survival of their records but in the late fifteenth century especially it had a marked degree of civic influence and connection. After the exertion of its force against the Merchants' Company in 1558/59 the guild declined in stature. By 1589 it had a 'store' (of cash in hand) of only about £5, compared to £14 in 1544, and ordinances were made whereby masters were to contribute to guild finances in the year of their office.<sup>742</sup> However, the Tailors' guild must have possessed vitality as it was to survive in Exeter well into the nineteenth century.

### 4.3 Exeter Tailors as Traders

#### *The Exeter Tailors and Trade*

The term 'merchant tailor' is largely absent from Exeter at this time. However, tailors were the most numerous and economically active artisans to become involved in trade. The papers which emanated from the dispute concerning the foundation of the Exeter Merchants' Company in the late 1550s are very useful for the insights which they provide into the other occupations and guilds and into the attitudes concerning them. In particular, the 'Answer of the Merchants' of 1559 shows how the participation of tailors in trading was viewed. The Answer states:

'And it hath not been seen except now of late that any hath entered into the trade of merchandise being an artificer unless he first have given over his occupation and mystery ....'

The defence then proceeds to cite examples from recent Exeter history at the time to substantiate this claim such as Thomas Andrew who is stated to have:

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<sup>740</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB I f.139.

<sup>741</sup> Fox, *Some Account*, p.18.

<sup>742</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.68b.



‘forsook the art and mystery of tailors’

to be involved in merchandise and Geoffrey Lewis who:

‘when he gan to make cloth and to sell wyne left cuttyng and making of garments’.

As the merchants continued to state:

‘ffor it hath ben allwaies the use and custome that no man sholde lyve by trade of merchandise oneles he were a merchant or wolde leave his art and become a merchant’.

Thomas Andrew is called upon again:

‘For though one Thomas Andrew a tailor of this city did leave behind him a worthy memory yet did he that when he had forsaken the mystery and trade of a tailor....’.<sup>743</sup>

### *The Exeter Tailors and Trade in the Late Fifteenth Century*

A first useful list of men involved in the tailors’ guild comes from the dispute with the city council in Edward IV’s reign. The names of 21 tailors who opposed the city council in 1476 and the names of 10 tailors who renounced the charter that the tailors were trying to obtain, were recorded.<sup>744</sup> This gives us a good insight into the prominent tailors at a time, just before the start of the first extant Act Book of the guild. There are also a number of other lists of members of the guild for this time, compiled by the guild mainly to provide the names of those who had contributed towards the provision for a priest, St John the Baptist fraternity members, and those tailors available, or providing men, for the muster. In utilising these guild lists to examine involvement in trade only the masters have been considered and not the bachelors or free sowers, who are noted in some of the lists. It is much more likely that the senior men would have been involved in trade. In total there are no less than eight extant lists covering the years from 1477 to 1481.<sup>745</sup> The names of 30 key tailors have been compared with the entries in the customs accounts.

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<sup>743</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185 no.22.

<sup>744</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 55 ff. 53-54 (printed in *Exeter Freeman*, p.387).

<sup>745</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA ff.4, 9, 92-96.

There were a group of late-fifteenth-century tailors who were active in their guild, in the city's government, and also in overseas trade at the same time. Appendix 22 shows the extent of their civic roles. This suggests that tailoring as a craft and taking part in the overseas trade were not mutually exclusive. In the 1470s and 1480s two tailors figured prominently in the overseas trade: John Ector and John Godiscote. Here the focus will be the most fully documented example, John Ector. During this period he was primarily bringing in shipments of cloth, especially crest cloth, but also canvas. His imports were a little more varied and included some woad and salt. His shipments came overwhelmingly in vessels which had Topsham recorded as a port of connection.<sup>746</sup> We have far more information on imports rather than exports at this period. Ector opposed the city council in 1478 and went on to become master warden of the tailors' guild in 1483. He served as master since he was included in the lists of the guild's common council or 'eight men' from 1494 to 1498.<sup>747</sup> Ector was also referred to as a 'merchant' in bringing a case to Chancery.<sup>748</sup> He had also risen to some influence within the city serving as warden of Exe Bridge in 1487 and became a city bailiff in 1488. In Ector we therefore have evidence of a tailor who was serving within his guild and also shipping goods into the port of Exeter. Ector's trading role increased further as Exeter's fortunes continued to advance in the 1490s. He was one of the seven traders who have been identified as substantial men with an investment of over £200 in Exeter's trade in 1492/93.<sup>749</sup> Ector was exporting as well as importing. In the 1490s he was certainly exporting quantities of tin alongside different types of cloth: undyed cloth, broadcloths, white and russet straits and undyed straits. He continued to import mainly crest cloth but also linen cloth and canvas. In addition he brought in dyestuffs such as madder and woad and also rosin.<sup>750</sup> He also became involved in the full variety of trade as one cargo imported in November 1493 testifies. This included items connected with the cloth industry such as shearman's shears and combs and cards as well as canvas, linen cloth and blue thread. There was equally much miscellaneous material like shoes, beads, bottles, brushes, glass, points and treen spoons. This varied cargo also included

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<sup>746</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 10/11, 13/14, 16/17, 17/18, 20/21 Edward IV.

<sup>747</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A ff.25, 29, 31-33, 91.

<sup>748</sup> TNA, C1/199/75.

<sup>749</sup> Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade', p.86.

<sup>750</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 8/9, 9/10, 10/11, 12/13, 13/14 Henry VII; TNA E122/41/15, 41/18.

building materials and furnishings. This involved a considerable investment. His shipments continued to be mainly in Topsham ships but he was also using vessels from Morlaix.<sup>751</sup> Godiscote's activities were similar but on a smaller scale.<sup>752</sup>

Apart from Ector and Godiscote other tailors working within the guild in the later fifteenth century were involved in the overseas trade to some extent.

Comparisons were made between the known tailors in 1476/1477 and 1481, with the extant customs accounts. In both lists there are a further seven identifiable tailors involved in trade. Some of them only imported cloth. Some had wider concerns and brought in a variety of goods such as wine, soap, fustians, mantels, hake and hatch nails. They did use local vessels but by no means exclusively so. Although there is more evidence of imports they were also exporters.

#### *The Tailors and the Trade Boom of the 1490s and 1500s*

Some tailors who were active in their craft really benefitted from the trading boom which the port of Exeter experienced between 1490 and 1510. Most prominent amongst these was Thomas Andrew, with whom we can test the assertion made in the 'Answer of the Merchants' in 1559 that craftsmen left their occupation before they took up trade.

Thomas Andrew's involvement in the Tailors' guild can be compared with his civic career and also with his involvement in trade as evidenced in the extant customs accounts. Hooker, in his biographical sketches of Exeter mayors, notes that 'by arte and profession he was a taylor'.<sup>753</sup> He became a freeman in 1478 and appeared in a list of guild 'bachelors' in 1482.<sup>754</sup> By 1492 we know that he

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<sup>751</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 9/10 Henry VII.

<sup>752</sup> TNA, E122/201/2; DHC, TC 10/11, 16/17, 17/18 Edward IV, 5/6, 10/11 Henry VII; DHC, ECA, TAB 1 ff. 25, 31-35, 40, 91, 137; TAB 1A ff.29, 91. In comparison with Ector in the 1470s John Godiscote was importing almost exclusively crest cloth with some canvas and wine and sending out white and russet straits overwhelmingly in local vessels from Topsham and Ottermouth. By the 1490s he became the warden of Exe Bridge and a city bailiff but by 1503 he was city receiver, thus attaining a higher rank than Ector. He was also still involved in the governing of the Tailors' guild throughout this time and was included as one of the 'eight men' in seven lists of them between 1494 and 1503. He appears less frequently in the customs accounts in the 1490s than Ector but imported some crest cloth and woad and exported friezes.

<sup>753</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.341.

<sup>754</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.58; DHC, ECA, TAB 1A f.96.

was serving as a warden of Exe Bridge, the first rung on the ladder to a civic career.<sup>755</sup>

Thomas Andrew was clearly a leading tailor and in 1494 he became master of the Tailors' guild. He played a role in steering its affairs. He appears first as one of 'there counsell' in 1496 and by 1497 he was listed as one of the 'viiij men'. References to his role here continue for every year between 1498 and 1503 and by 1506 he had become 'Master' Thomas Andrew. The last reference to him as one of the 'viiij men' appears in 1512.<sup>756</sup> He had not at this point turned his back on his craft at all but was closely involved with it.

Yet at the same time Thomas Andrew also became more involved in trading and progressed with a very successful civic career. He was an overseas trader by September 1489.<sup>757</sup> He was not, even from the first, solely trading in cloth. The initial scope of his mercantile interests was wide. He was soon involved in the wine trade. There were a number of shipments made by him in a range of Devonian and Cornish vessels. He was concerned with shipping commodities with much higher values, such as the iron he brought in July 1493, having a value of £40. In the 1490s he was, however, involved in the export of the typical cloths alongside commodities such as tin and calfskins. He was also bringing in domestic and building shipments as well as cargoes of fish. Like many of the more substantial merchants Thomas Andrew had a hand in all levels of the trade. The broad nature of his trading activity did not alter much in the following decades and he was trading certainly up to June 1516.<sup>758</sup>

At the start of the sixteenth century Thomas Andrew's civic career advanced as he became receiver in 1500 and mayor in 1504 and 1510. This was at the same time as he was still a central figure in the tailors' guild. The civic work of the city councillors can be traced due to the survival of the city Act Books from 1508. Thomas Andrew had a strong attendance record, only missing 7 of 93 meetings.<sup>759</sup> He was warden of the city's Magdalen hospital from 1508

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<sup>755</sup> DHC, ECA, Accounts of the Wardens of Exe Bridge 8/9 Henry VII.

<sup>756</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.137.

<sup>757</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 5/6 Henry VII.

<sup>758</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 9/10, 10/11, 12/13, 13/14, 17/18, 18/19, 20/21 Henry VII; TNA E122/41/15, 41/18, 20/2, 41/25, 201/4, 42/2, 201/5.

<sup>759</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I.

to 1516.<sup>760</sup> Evidence of his growing role as a merchant is that he was mayor of the city's Staple Court in 1513.<sup>761</sup> The apogee of his civic career had come a few years previously when he had been elected as one of the Exeter M.P.s for the 1510 Parliament.<sup>762</sup> The last surviving reference to him within the Tailors' guild records is in 1512.<sup>763</sup> It may be that in his last few years he concentrated on his trading and his civic career, as well as his other emerging business interests, rather than the affairs of the tailors. In 1514 his apprentice John Blackaller became a freeman of the city. Blackaller was a merchant who was to become his son-in-law.<sup>764</sup> Thomas Andrew himself was referred to as a merchant from Exeter in a Chancery case of 1518.<sup>765</sup> In his will of April 1517, the witnesses included prominent tailors. However, he did not make a bequest to the Tailors' guild.<sup>766</sup> A final indication that, in his later years, he may well have abandoned his involvement with the Exeter tailors and concentrated solely on his mercantile career, is the fact that his surviving tomb carries the arms of the Merchant Adventurers, as shown in Appendix 14.<sup>767</sup>

To ascertain if other Exeter tailors were taking advantage of the trading boom a list was compiled of 40 known tailors' guild officials between 1493 and 1505. From this a further eight tailors were identified in the customs accounts, though only two of these made regular shipments. None of them were trading exclusively in cloth though William Wilkinson was working primarily as a trader in cloth.<sup>768</sup> Some were city bailiffs, and one entered the Twenty Four. Two were masters of the Tailors' guild. Here we certainly have examples of tailors who had moved into trading at the same time as they were at the heart of the tailoring interests within the city. However, it must be said that many of the Tailors' guild officials from between 1493 and 1505 did not take the step into overseas trading. Trading was perhaps a move for the ambitious few.

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<sup>760</sup> DHC, ECA, ED/MAG/108-122.

<sup>761</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I f.33a.

<sup>762</sup> <http://www.historyofparliamenttrustonline.org/> .

<sup>763</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB IA f.137.

<sup>764</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.67.

<sup>765</sup> TNA, C1/539/17. Robert Mewe brought a case for the recovery of two salt cellars which had been pledged with Andrew.

<sup>766</sup> TNA Prob 11/18/30.

<sup>767</sup> B.F. Cresswell, *Exeter Churches*, Exeter, 1908, pp.93-95.

<sup>768</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 13/14, 17/18, 18/19, 20/21, 23/24 Henry; TNA, E122/41/15, 41/18, 41/25, 201/2.

### *The Exeter Tailors and Overseas Trade in the 1520s and Mid-Century*

The list of Tailors' guild members from 1520 contains the names of 51 tailors and seven of them, much the same as in previous decades, appear in the customs accounts.<sup>769</sup> None of the rest of them feature with the same regularity as the tailor-merchants of the earlier period. However, John Bradmore, was a man of substantial means, and city mayor in 1520. He was one of the men cited by the merchants 'Answer' as having left the tailors' craft to pursue a mercantile career. Bradmore was certainly referred to as a merchant and was traced in most of the surviving customs accounts from 1504 up to 1530. Overwhelmingly he was trading in standard commodities such as cloth and tin.<sup>770</sup> Sometimes his shipments were of high value such as the crest cloth valued at £45 which he imported in 1509 or the Cornish tin valued at £37 which he exported in 1519.<sup>771</sup> The latter trading was taking place in the same year as he was at the centre of the Tailors' guild and the civic hierarchy. Bradmore was included in an undated list of the 'viiij men (the senior men who were former guild masters) so, it was clearly untrue that he abandoned his craft, or at least its guild, to become a merchant.<sup>772</sup>

The trading tailors of the 1520s were perhaps not as economically significant as those of the earlier decades. Change was under way. None were of the same economic stature as Bradmore. However, some other tailors who are included in the 1520 list had a fairly substantial involvement in trade. In civic terms they included a city bailiff, and a warden of Exe Bridge. One became master of the guild twice, and one once, whilst others advanced as far as master warden and warden. Three were listed as members of the 'viiij men'. They were all involved in trading in a reasonable range of goods at the same time and none of them dealt exclusively in cloth. We have evidence, therefore, that at this time tailors were at least not excluded from the trade.

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<sup>769</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A f.105.

<sup>770</sup> DHC ECA, TC 20/21, 23/24 Henry VII, ½ Henry VIII; E122/42/2, 201/6, 42/4, 42/6, 42/7, 42/8, 42/9, 43/2.

<sup>771</sup> DHC, ECA, TC1/2 Henry VIII; TNA E122/42/4.

<sup>772</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1A f.71.

Two lists of tailors' guild members were examined from 1559 and 1564. The first contains the names of 62 members and the second 66 members.<sup>773</sup> It is striking that none of these tailors appear in the customs accounts as traders. This was the time of the foundation of the Merchants' Company and by then tailors were mostly excluded from trade. The 1559 and 1564 lists both contain 14 men termed 'master' and thus more likely to have been trading. None appear in the customs accounts. By the end of the period the role of the tailors in Exeter had become more limited to guild affairs rather than civic ones. No member of the Tailors' guild became city mayor between 1549 and 1578. In the 1550s and 60s two tailors who became drapers held the receivership. Six other tailors did become city bailiffs, but were thus effectively outside the inner governing circle. All of these men had served as guild masters.<sup>774</sup> Thus tailors' roles in both international trade and civic government were substantially reduced over time.

## ***Conclusion***

This study is the most detailed investigation of the Exeter tailors. It has drawn on the previously largely unused records of the Tailors' guild. For the Tudor period the central importance of the Exeter tailors within the city's economic and political fabric has been established. At the start of this period about 50 master tailors had businesses within the city and by the end of the time this had risen to nearer 70. They provided the greatest challenges to the re-establishment of oligarchical control by the merchants. However, the tailors were at their most prominent in the late-fifteenth and earlier decades of the sixteenth century and by mid-century there was a wider gulf between the merchants and the artisans confirming the ascendancy of the former.

It is possible to identify a number of changes and developments in the lives of the tailors. Although tailors worked across the city they were less often living in the central and more socially prestigious parishes by the 1550s. By that time fewer tailors were members of the wealthier civic elite than had been the case

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<sup>773</sup> DHC, ECA, TAB 1 ff.27b, 33b.

<sup>774</sup> See Appendix 22.

in the 1520s. Far fewer tailors, by the mid-sixteenth century, held the higher political offices.

The Exeter tailors were involved in a wide range of work. The majority of them made men's clothes but the production of women's garments was also important for many. Hosiery was more important in Exeter than has previously been supposed and much of this work was carried out by tailors and by hosiers who were members of their guild. A small group of tailors worked as embroiderers but it has not been possible to establish many certain links with the cathedral as has been found for embroiders and vestment-makers in York. There is less evidence for the involvement of women in the trade than for some cities either as seamstresses or as guild members. There were very few demarcation disputes between the tailors and other crafts compared to those in some other towns.

Most tailors worked in shops with a work space and retail outlet. They worked on cloth purchased by the client and did not sell ready garments. The Exeter tailors accord with Swanson's notion of being a group with wide variations. The Earls of Devon employed an Exeter tailor and the successful tailors had networks of clients which included prominent gentry, clergy and farming families. Some had strong client bases in Exeter and customers were spread throughout the South Western counties and further afield. Even some middling tailors had business links with London. The wealthier tailors employed a small group of apprentices but most had one at any time or none. Tailoring businesses in the city were strongly reliant on wage workers and some employed up to three men as 'free sowers'. Tailors were involved in cloth selling and the most successful men became drapers. Drapers were not a distinct occupational group in Exeter at this time though individuals, who were former tailors, worked with great success. Tailors had close connections with the gentry and in some cases much local political influence. In contrast there were, however, a group of struggling tailors who paid shop fines for over three decades and never entered the city freedom. The survival of shop fine records, especially from the reign of Henry VIII, provides us with a rare insight into the lives of these men.



The Exeter tailors' guild headed political challenges to the merchants in the years from 1461 to 1482 and in 1558/59. The earlier challenge was the more serious one as at that time the tailors were more closely integrated within the city elite and council. The tailors' leaders in the mid-sixteenth century were much more clearly identifiable as men from a second tier of standing within the city and within two decades from then it was in a much more subordinate position. The evidence suggests that the guild was providing a social function and role for the tailors, in the manner which Rosser argues that guilds did, up to at least the 1520s.<sup>775</sup> After this time the tailors are much more clearly involved with economic regulation in areas such as quality and workmanship and maintaining the guild's control over all aspects of tailoring within the city. There is little evidence of it becoming involved in disputes with other crafts, demarcation or wage disputes. Much of the guilds' time was spent on disciplining its members for both economic and social offences. It did also move into providing some economic protection for the guildsmen but did not become involved in charitable action more widely in the city as the merchants did. The Tailors' guild in the 1550s and 1560s was, however, more than just an agency of the city council, as Swanson suggests many guilds in towns had become in this period.<sup>776</sup>

The clearest indication of the widening gulf between merchant and artisan is evident in the involvement of the Exeter tailors in overseas trade. The wealthier tailors were considerably involved in the late-fifteenth century and exported and imported a far wider range of goods than just cloth. The leading tailors were fully able to take advantage of Exeter's trading boom in the years from the 1490s to the 1510s and were still prominent traders in the 1520s. However, by the mid-sixteenth century the tailors do not appear in the customs accounts as traders. Exeter's overseas and coastal commerce had become firmly the preserve of the merchant as the city came under the first stages of re-asserted domination by a merchant oligarchy.

There are few direct comparisons possible with research on other provincial cities. Comparisons with the London merchants are not often helpful as the

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<sup>775</sup> Rosser, *Art of Solidarity*, pp.202-211.

<sup>776</sup> Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure', pp.29-48.

scale of metropolitan life was so different. Swanson has noted that tailors were living in every parish in York as in Exeter. Other studies of tailors in provincial towns, such as that by Douglas of the Salisbury tailors, covering a similar period, do not consider their place of residence. Swanson has noted that there were usually large variations in terms of the relative wealth of the tailors within the craft in the towns. A valuable study in terms of the comparison of the relative wealth of different occupations has been made by Champion for Shrewsbury in 1525.<sup>777</sup> This has been facilitated by the unusual composition of the 1525 lay subsidy where the returns listed the taxpayers under the fifteen different craft affiliations or as 'Out of Craft' if they were not guild members. Direct linkage of occupation and wealth is therefore much more possible for Shrewsbury than other towns. There are complications with regard to Shrewsbury, however, due to the numerous craft affiliations there. The tailors were combined there with the skinners. This joint group were only the sixth highest ranked in terms of wealth in 1525. The percentage of those taxpayers assessed on over £20 in Shrewsbury was less than half of that in Exeter. Further, Shrewsbury did not have what have been termed the rich merchants, assessed on over £100, who were prominent in other cities such as Bristol, Salisbury or Norwich. In Northampton and Leicester tailors certainly ranked higher in the 1520s as the third most prosperous group. In terms of the relative standing of the occupation in the provincial towns it was only in York that the tailors occupied a similar high position to that in Exeter, at times challenging the merchant elite.<sup>778</sup> The fortunes of Exeter's tailors can be sharply contrasted with the Worcester ones studied by Dyer. There the tailors suffered a decline in their economic significance within the city and were facing increasing competition from rural tailors.<sup>779</sup> Exeter's tailors were economically successful in relation to all the other provincial towns studied with the exception of York. It is true, however, that even if the Exeter tailors in terms of their numbers, the standing of their guild and their political prominence were the next most significant occupational group after the merchants, by the 1560s, a much greater distance had opened between the two groups than at their apogee in

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<sup>777</sup> Champion, 'Shrewsbury Lay Subsidy'.

<sup>778</sup> Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.151.

<sup>779</sup> Dyer, *City of Worcester*, pp.82, 84, 89-90, 129-30.

the 1470s. The changes in the standing of the Exeter merchants over this period will be examined fully in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: THE EXETER MERCHANTS 1470-1570

### 5.1 Exeter Merchant Businesses

#### *Merchant Businesses*

This section will explore the nature of merchants' businesses. It will consider the occupation of a merchant in this period in Exeter in relation to retailing and wholesaling and show the division between the two mercantile activities was not really drawn in Exeter at this time. It will also consider the complexity of the term 'merchant' in the city in relation to other distributive trades. The wide activities of Exeter merchants are illustrated by reference to the 1564 'shop book' of Henry Maunder, a middling merchant. The size of the businesses and the trading networks of some of the leading merchants are analysed. The training of merchants, mainly known about from the disputes concerning them, is discussed, as is the residence of some leading Exeter merchants abroad, notably Thomas Bond in Corunna at the turn of the sixteenth century. Finally the organisation of merchant businesses into partnerships is analysed, both in terms of possibly longer lasting partnerships, such as that of Bodley and Gale (1533-1535) and the move towards groupings together of wider numbers of merchants for individual ventures.

Merchants were the most common occupation in terms of admissions to the city freedom throughout the period from 1450 to 1600. In the sixteenth century they accounted for a quarter of freedom admissions.<sup>780</sup> As shown in the sample four accounts in Appendix 33 their numbers nearly doubled between the 1490s and the 1560s. The customs accounts overall show that the number of Exeter merchants identified almost doubled between 1470 and 1561 and had increased further by 1565.<sup>781</sup> By the 1560s there were up to 85 men working as merchants in some form in Exeter, though the Merchants' Company had 65 members in 1560 and 75 in 1570.<sup>782</sup> Youings saw an increase in the size of the Exeter merchant class between the 1550s and the 1590s when as many as five merchants per year were entering the Exeter freedom.<sup>783</sup> Hoskins states that

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<sup>780</sup> See 3.1.

<sup>781</sup> See Appendix 33.

<sup>782</sup> See 6.3.

<sup>783</sup> Youings, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', p.104.

there were probably 100 Exeter merchant families by the 1590s.<sup>784</sup> As they were freemen few consequently paid shop fines, constituting less than 4% of payers between 1512 and 1542. We probably have an accurate directory of most of the Exeter merchants, especially from about the 1520s onwards.

Exeter merchants were wealthy. Twice as many Exeter citizens contributed to the Anticipation in 1523 than any other Devon town, being assessed on over £40 worth of goods, (Exeter had 61 payers and the next largest number was in Totnes with 30 and Plymouth with 15). More significantly Exeter had more than six times as many contributors assessed on over £100 than the next largest number, Totnes and Cullompton, with five payers and Plymouth with four. At the top of Exeter society there were 13 citizens assessed on over £200 worth of goods. This was a much larger number than in the same three Devon towns ranked next, which had two each. However, Exeter did not have the wealthiest merchants in Devon overall as John Pownde of Plymouth (£410) and John Giles of Totnes (£360) were assessed on higher amounts than Exeter's John Brycknall and Gilbert Kirk (both £300).<sup>785</sup> The wealth gap continued into the 1540s as in the lay subsidy of 1544 ten Exeter citizens were assessed on over £100 and three on over £200, (plus a further man from St Leonards, just outside the city), far more than the numbers in other Devon towns. Only Tavistock and Kenton also had men assessed on goods over £100. The Exonian William Hurst was the highest assessed man in Devon (on 400 marks/ £266 13s 4d).<sup>786</sup>

Many Exeter merchants in the years between 1470 and 1570 were not only engaged in wholesale trading but also had a retail outlet in the form of a shop in the city. Some of the more substantial merchants may well have been 'mere merchants' but there is not enough evidence to substantiate this.<sup>787</sup> 'Mere merchants' were engaged in wholesale buying and selling and overseas commerce more widely and were not merchant retailers with a shop. It is

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<sup>784</sup> Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants', p.165.

<sup>785</sup> John Giles was mayor of Totnes in 1517/18 and MP in 1529, 1536 and 1539. He was born by 1487 and died in 1553: [www.historyofparliamentonline.org](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org); Nicholls, 'Trading Communities', pp.12, 139.

<sup>786</sup> Stoute, ed. *Devon Lay Subsidies*, pp. 50-52, 58-60, 128, 140. Seven leading Totnes citizens were assessed on lands headed by John Giles, assessed on £85 of lands and including other members of the trading Giles, Savery and Blackall families. In Plymouth the merchant William Hawkins was assessed on lands worth £66 but leading merchants were not assessed on lands in Tiverton or Cullompton.

<sup>787</sup> For a discussion of these terms see Sacks, *Widening Gate*, pp.125-127.

possible the Periams had always had a business as 'mere merchants' and were opposed to the retailing base maintained by many of the Exeter traders.<sup>788</sup> The first John Periam, in particular, seems to have headed a group of merchants in the late 1550s who wanted a more exclusive company of 'mere merchants'.<sup>789</sup> Some of the leading merchants, such as William Hurst, have left far more evidence for overseas trading and may not have been engaged in retail but the evidence is not sufficient to be sure. Evidence from deeds and leases suggests that some of the more substantial merchants, who served as mayors, did hold a shop such as William Obley in 1471, Gilbert Kirk in 1533 and Thomas Brewerton in 1567.<sup>790</sup> In Exeter the line between the merchant retailer and the mere merchant had not been drawn as it was elsewhere. The leading Exeter merchants were wholesalers, as the quantities involved in their trading show. For instance Gilbert Kirk's recorded trading activities in 1531/32 provide evidence that he was engaged in wholesale trading as well as having a shop. In that year he brought into the port of Exeter a great volume and variety of goods.<sup>791</sup> He also exported large quantities.<sup>792</sup> Gilbert Kirk's trading network, as Appendix 29 illustrates, shows that he was distributing these goods to places in East, West and North Devon, Somerset and Dorset. Other Exeter merchants, such as Thomas Prestwood, also traded in large quantities indicative of wholesaling activities in the same year.<sup>793</sup>

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<sup>788</sup> John Periam's career in civic office was an interrupted one as he had become receiver in 1552 but did not serve his first mayoralty until 1563 and then again in 1572.

<sup>789</sup> See 6.6.

<sup>790</sup> RAMM, Sue Reece Index; DHC, ECA, ED/M/859/860, 5102; RR 24/25 Henry VIII; MCR 8/9 Eliz. I m.32.

<sup>791</sup> TNA, E122/201/8. 142 pieces of crest cloth, 97 hundreds of canvas, 66 tons of non-sweet wine, 29 tons of iron, 28 tons of salt, 26 tons of fruit, 70 hundreds of white soap, three hundreds of alum, prunes and hops, 19 dozen old cards, 13 dozen new cards, 11 dozens of thread and quantities of oil, buckram, steel, almonds, aniseed, pepper and glass. See R.E. Zupko, *A Dictionary of English Weights and Measures from Anglo Saxon Times to the Nineteenth Century*, Wisconsin, 1968, p.35 for hundreds.

<sup>792</sup> TNA, E122/201/7. This included 115 cloths without grain, 40 hundreds of lead and 32 hundreds of tin in the same year.

<sup>793</sup> TNA E122/201/8. In that year his recorded imports included 110 pieces of crest cloth, 13 hundreds of canvas, 26 dozen new cards, 14 dozen old cards, 18 dozen kimperlings, 14 dozens of thread, 17 dozen hats, six hundred weights of prunes, three hogsheads of fruit, one puncheon of nuts, two and a half hundreds of hops, one hundreds of sugar, one hundred of alum, eight reams of black paper, six reams of white paper, three barrels of oil, three barrels of swarrow, 120 hundreds of hatch nails and one and a half summa of lath nails, half a gross of beads and other unspecified miscellaneous goods.

Kowaleski characterises merchants as those with a 'strong distributive function' and 'wholesaling interests' who 'participated in maritime trade'. In the late fourteenth century she notes that the distributive trades were mainly merchants (78% of the total she identifies) and retailers (chapmen, brokers and chandlers). These men were more general merchants who diversified their trading rather than having trade specialisms. She also notes a group of less affluent retailers who resold inexpensive goods and were not wholesalers or maritime traders.<sup>794</sup>

The term "merchant" was often synonymous with general retailer. In Exeter the merchant group included mercers, chapmen and chandlers and the terms were more interchangeable than has been commonly supposed. The occupations of Exeter defendants in the Court of Common Pleas include a range of distributive trades.<sup>795</sup> In particular, it helps to emphasise the fluidity of the use of occupational designations in Exeter as there are merchant/mercers, merchant/grocers, merchant/tallow chandlers, merchant/clothiers, merchant/chapmen and merchant/esquires, husbandmen, yeomen and gentlemen.<sup>796</sup> Some occupations were more specialised such as mercers, though Exeter men who were called mercers were also designated as merchants. In Exeter the mercers were probably retail traders who sold a wide variety of goods not produced in the locality, as in other provincial towns.<sup>797</sup> Mercers and their apprentices are present in the freemen's records for the 1460s and 1470s but then there is a gap until 1503. There are hardly any references to mercers up to the 1540s then there are few references to them until 1590. Four have been identified as paying shop fines. However, in Common Pleas, Exeter defendants were designated as mercers far more frequently, in every decade from the 1470s to the 1550s, as shown in Appendix 13. Even Exeter's leading merchant, William

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<sup>794</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.126-7.

<sup>795</sup> See Appendix 13.

<sup>796</sup> TNA, CP 40/853, 911, 943, 951, 959, 983, 1038, 1046, 1055, 1057, 1064, 1084, 1124, 1127, 1135, 1139. Merchant/Mercers John Amore and William Rede both in 1523 and Thomas Monday in 1544 and 1546; Merchant/Grocers Richard Hewett in 1490 and John Buller in 1526 and 1528; Merchant/Tallow Chandler Thomas Bray in 1475; Merchant/ Clothier Christopher Potter in 1546; Merchant/Chapman William Ratcliffe in 1548; Merchant/ Goldsmith Richard Bassett in 1535. There were also Merchant/Esquires such as John Drake in 1545; Merchant/Husbandmen such as Humphrey Andrew in 1525; Merchant/Yeomen such as Robert Bonefaunt in 1490 and Richard Waggot in 1498 and Merchant/Gentlemen such as John Bonefaunt in 1502 and John Bradmore in 1527 and 1528 identified in Common Pleas.

<sup>797</sup> [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com).

Hurst, was termed a mercer in 1516, 1526 and 1535.<sup>798</sup> They were also closely linked with the merchants in towns such as York and Ipswich though they were a significant distinct occupation in Worcester.<sup>799</sup> Exeter vintners were defendants in Common Pleas between 1505 and 1510 but no specialist vintners appear in the freemen's lists until 1578.<sup>800</sup> Only two haberdashers entered the city freedom in the early Tudor period but no less than 16 haberdashers became freemen in the 1580s and 1590s.<sup>801</sup> The distributive trade in groceries in the city remains somewhat of a mystery. The term 'merchant' probably conceals a number of men who sold groceries from their shops in the city. Grocers were identified in Common Pleas in 1490 and 1526 but there is no other reference to them until one was admitted to the freedom in 1585.<sup>802</sup> A group of spicers was trading in fourteenth century Exeter but two centuries later these have disappeared. Probably much of the retailing in this type of goods was done by the general merchants and apothecaries. Chandlers were perhaps involved in the sale of wax and candles and the large quantity of soap that was imported into Exeter. Specialist retailers in metal goods also had shops in the city. A hardwareman appeared in Common Pleas in 1484 but only from 1584 were a few hardwaremen and ironmongers enfranchised.<sup>803</sup> Overall the term 'merchant' covered a wide range of economic activities in Exeter.

Trade in high value shipments (over £40) give us a good indication of the major trading concerns of the Exeter merchants. This is most evident in the export of tin. Exeter's importance as a centre for tin exports, in the years before 1550, was seen by Hatcher as being at its peak in the last three decades of the

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<sup>798</sup> TNA, CP 40/1013, 1046, 1084.

<sup>799</sup> Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.159; Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*, pp.234-235; Dyer, *City of Worcester*, pp.85-90. Worcester had no designated merchant group.

<sup>800</sup> TNA, CP 40/971/983, 990; Richard Pavy vintner in 1505 and Thomas Redgate in 1508 and 1510, when he was also designated as a taverner. *Exeter Freeman*, p. 94. William Bolton paid a £2 entry fine in 1578. The next vintners entering the freedom were in the 1590s.

<sup>801</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, pp.57, 69. John Ossett, the apprentice of Thomas Fryday in 1473 and Robert Beell, the son of an Exe Island parchment maker and apprentice of the haberdasher Thomas Rewe in 1525. No less than 16 haberdashers became freemen in the 1580s and 1590s.

<sup>802</sup> TNA, CP 40/911, 1046; *Exeter Freeman*, pp.66, 98; Richard Hewet, mayor in 1506 and 1513, was termed a merchant and grocer in 1490 and John Buller a grocer and merchant in 1526. Hewet is usually called a merchant and John Buller, senior in this case, served an apprenticeship with a mercer.

<sup>803</sup> TNA, CP40/888; William Asset an Exeter hardwardeman in 1484; *Exeter Freeman*, p.98.



fifteenth century.<sup>804</sup> In the boom years of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries Exeter merchants exported a similar number of high value cargoes of tin through the port of Exeter as English traders from other towns. However, the number of high value tin shipments by Exeter men, compared to men from other towns, rose to four times the rate between the 1520s and the 1560s. Five shipments of tin by Exeter merchants valued at over £100 are recorded in the customs accounts across the period headed by one of Cornish tin worth £166 13s 4d.<sup>805</sup> The highest valued cargoes of tin exported by non-Exeter men were ones of £85 and £70.<sup>806</sup> Exeter merchants had considerable capital investments in the export of tin.

Crest cloth was also a further important commodity with many merchant shipments valued at over £40 entering the port. Exeter men brought in large numbers of these valuable shipments in the years of growth (44 between the 1480s and the 1540s). However, Taunton, Topsham and Tiverton merchants also brought in larger numbers (78 crest cloth shipments worth over £40 in the same period). The importance of higher value cargoes of crest cloth for all traders declined by the mid-sixteenth century.

The most valuable import commodity overall was woad. Much in the earlier period originated in Toulouse but by the early sixteenth century it was primarily from the Azores.<sup>807</sup> Exeter merchants did import valuable woad cargoes such

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<sup>804</sup> J. Hatcher, *English Tin Production and Trade before 1550*, Oxford, 1973, pp.92, 113, 119, 123, 126-129, 174.

<sup>805</sup> TNA E190/925/6; E122/ 41/12, 42/4, 43/11, 201/3 record the other tin exports of highest value between £100 and £160.

<sup>806</sup> By Rado Turnier, an alien merchant in 1500 and from an English merchant of £70 by William Usher of London in 1509. TNA E122/201/2, 42/1.

<sup>807</sup> Highly-valued cargoes of woad are termed 'guald' in some accounts or occasionally 'guald tolosa,' such as in 1538 (TNA, E122/43/11) thus suggesting its origins in the Toulouse area. Later it is referred to in the customs accounts as 'pastell de insula', 'pastell', 'gualde insula', 'island wode' 'grene woode' and 'wode de Suris.' (TNA, E122/42/4, 42/7, 43/2, 201/8, 43/4, 43/8, 201/13, 44/4, 45/12, 45/12A). The Surreys was a sixteenth-century name for the Azores: Vanes, *Ledger*, p.359. In July 1565 John Perriam imported 200 kintalls of 'pastell' valued at £100 from the 'insula St. Michaelis', the port book giving the place of embarkation. This was San Miguel, the largest island of the Azores: TNA, E190/925/6. For the Azores trade: Diffie, Boyd Shafer and Winius, *Portuguese Empire*, p.308; [www.azoresgeopark.com](http://www.azoresgeopark.com); D. Sayers, *The Azores*, London, 2016, p.19. Connell Smith saw many of the Spanish woad imports into English ports as being often re-exported goods from Southern France: G. Connell Smith, *Forerunners of Drake: A Study of English Trade with Spain in the Early Tudor Period*, London, 1954, p.5. Thirsk showed how the price of woad increased in the 1540s due to the uncertainties of foreign imports and the debasements: J. Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England*, Oxford, 1978, p.27. We can see from the Exeter

as that of £325 by Thomas Andrew in 1500, £300 by Gilbert Kirk in 1533 and £216 by John Strobridge in 1551.<sup>808</sup> These perhaps contributed to the making of individual fortunes but the role of the Exeter men in the trade was secondary. Merchants from other English ports imported nearly six times as many valuable woad cargoes as Exeter men or aliens in the late fifteenth century.<sup>809</sup> By the 1520s, and especially by the 1550s, however, Spanish merchants were bringing in many more cargoes of woad of high value. Three of these were worth over £400 and the 700 kintalls of 'pastelos de insula' imported into Exeter in August 1555 by the alien Thomas Dice was worth the vast amount of £566 13s 4d.<sup>810</sup> Exeter merchants gained a valuable foothold in the woad trade but the key role was taken over by alien merchants.

Some other commodities shipped through the port were also of high value, over £60. These were headed by the 45 tons of great raisins valued at £300 imported by the Exonians William Hurst, John Peter and John Midwinter in 1559 and the 875 pieces of raisins worth £215 15s shipped in by Laurence Boureman of Exmouth in 1562.<sup>811</sup> There were also valuable shipments of iron, soap, alum, sugar and millstones. Exports of cloth without grain (panni sine grano) were numerous but were not of such high value.<sup>812</sup>

No personal papers or business records of an Exeter trader have been traced for this period. The historian of Exeter's trading community is therefore at a disadvantage compared to that of Bristol, for which there are some excellent survivals.<sup>813</sup> However, we have the 'Shop Book' of Henry Maunder from 1564, a merchant who was active in the overseas trade and had a shop, a warehouse and a cellar in the city which has been analysed in Appendix 23. Henry

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customs accounts that some Toulouse woad was being imported into Exeter in 1561. (E122/45/12A). 'Guald' was the Medieval Latin term used in the customs accounts for woad. Later the term 'pastel' is also used: R.E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word List*, Oxford, 1965, pp.217, 335.

<sup>808</sup> TNA, E122/201/2, 43/4, 201/13.

<sup>809</sup> TNA, E122/201/2. Headed by the cargo valued £160 brought in by Stephen Danyell of Lyme in 1500.

<sup>810</sup> TNA, E122/201/14.

<sup>811</sup> TNA, E122/45/12A, 46/11.

<sup>812</sup> The other valuable cargoes of cloth were all imports including dowlas, lokeram and vitry canvas. Exported goods such as broadcloth, straits and white and russet straits were less represented.

<sup>813</sup> Such as the ledger of John Smythe, covering the years from 1538 to 1550: J. Vanes, ed., *The Ledger of John Smythe 1538-1550*, Bristol Record Society, 38, 1974 and some records for the Tyndall brothers in the 1540s especially: Vanes, *Documents*, pp.117-130.

Maunder was never a major merchant within the port of Exeter. He was engaged in both the import and the export trade. Maunder was predominantly a sole trader of cargoes. He often shipped goods on the same voyages as the leading Exeter merchants of the day. On a few occasions he shipped goods in partnership with another Exeter merchant. His shop was well stocked with imported and locally sourced cloth and with a wide range of haberdashery and other commodities. His warehouse housed many metal-ware goods and he also provided the iron which was imported into Exeter for the local smiths. His cellar shows a limited interest in the wine trade. His business was possibly typical of the middling Exeter merchant of the time. Hoskins suggested that the Elizabethan merchant in Exeter 'covered the whole range of trading, rather indiscriminately' and that only by the early seventeenth century was retail trade below the dignity of the greater merchants.<sup>814</sup> The scope of his business was wide. Maunder diversified as a retailer, a wholesaler, an overseas and coastal trader, a moneylender and a small-scale investor in shipping. With Maunder we have a sense of a man who was really enmeshed in the local community and who served both its wealthy and poorer members. Maunder would have been well known to, and had close business links with, the city artisans of the day. He was not a forward-looking merchant but one of the past who did not have too much in common with those advancing merchant families who were leading the city of Exeter. They were at the head of the more tightly controlled political and economic oligarchy which was advancing significantly by the time of his death.

Exeter merchants often operated wide trading links. They were involved in legal disputes with their customers and from some of the evidence of cases from the central courts we are able to identify their trading networks. Those of William Hurst and Gilbert Kirk have been traced from the records and are presented in Appendices 28 and 29. Hurst's trading network, for which we have more information, stretched widely including strong links with the cloth areas of East Devon and West Somerset and also with South Devon. Additionally he brought cases concerning debts owed to him by men in the North Devon area and as far afield as Bristol. Gilbert Kirk's trading network was concentrated on East Devon but also included men in North and West Devon, Somerset and Dorset. William Hurst had wealthy clients. He provided pepper, sugar loaves, comfits,

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<sup>814</sup> Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants', p.173.

cinnamon, 'caraways', 'pyscodds,' green ginger and prunes and some coloured glass for Katherine Courtenay, Countess of Devon in 1523, as her household book shows.<sup>815</sup> Hartrich noted that in the fifteenth century a number of merchants based their business in multiple towns, often those of their birth and where they migrated to.<sup>816</sup> She also saw that even lesser urban citizens, or those of small towns, were involved in inter-urban trade networks.

The merchants were the dominant economic group in Exeter at this time.<sup>817</sup> In the early sixteenth century the number of admissions by apprenticeship to the freedom by the merchants was four times greater than that of the next highest group, the tailors. This pattern was replicated in the later sixteenth century.<sup>818</sup> The rate of increase of merchants being admitted by apprenticeship really began to pick up by the 1520s with a further rate of increase from the 1550s. By this time they had asserted a greater political control within the city which was to be furthered in the later years of the century. By then they were more closely controlled by the Exeter Merchants' Company.

Some masters took on large numbers of apprentices during their careers. The most notable was William Hurst who over his career had 20 apprentices who took the freedom of the city. This suggests a business of some size which had more than the regulation two apprentices and two journeymen working for him at one time. The fifteenth century mercer Robert Smyth had eight apprentices admitted to the freedom between 1462 and 1472. The records of all the Exeter craftsmen and traders who had three or more apprentices entering the freedom, were analysed. This was confined to those men completing their apprenticeship before 1570. In total 26 masters were identified and 18 of these were merchants and one was a mercer (though he was on occasion referred to as a merchant), four were tailors (though some subsequently became referred to as drapers or merchant tailors), two were goldsmiths and one was a weaver.<sup>819</sup> Appendix 27

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<sup>815</sup> TNA, TR, E36/223 f.9b for the spices. M. Westcott, 'Katherine Courtenay, Countess of Devon 1479-1527' in T. Gray, M.M. Rowe and A. Erskine ed., *Tudor and Stuart Devon: The Common Estate and Government- Essays Presented to Joyce Youings*, Exeter, 1992, p. 29 for the coloured glass.

<sup>816</sup> Hartrich, *Politics*, p.35.

<sup>817</sup> See 3.1.

<sup>818</sup> Ibid.

<sup>819</sup> The information on apprentices is largely from *Exeter Freemen*.

lists all the masters and their apprentices. This could be seen as a directory of some of the most successful Exeter businessmen of the time.

### *The Training of Merchants*

Apprenticeship indentures often contained clauses about schooling or years of training overseas but the only extant Exeter indentures are some copies of tailors' apprenticeships within their guild records, discussed previously. Many of the skills needed by merchants were gained by practical experience. These were acquired not only in Exeter, under the direct supervision of a master, but also on visits to other ports and towns, and residence abroad. As Vanes notes, in the sixteenth century books on good manners, arithmetic and accountancy, books explaining commercial and legal documents, and copy books for hand writing and letter writing, all became available.<sup>820</sup> Handbooks for merchants which embraced a wide range of topics, such as John Browne's *The Merchants Avizo* were also published by the late 1580s.<sup>821</sup> These volumes probably found their way to Exeter, and certainly many more were available for merchants by the end of the sixteenth century than in the early Tudor period.

Exeter merchants showed concern for the training of their apprentices in their wills. In 1572 the prominent Exeter merchant Robert Midwinter stipulated that his son Matthew should spend 'one yere in ffraunce at the onelie costes of y said executors to learne the ffrenche and lattyn tonnge there'.<sup>822</sup> Some Exeter traders certainly possessed linguistic skills. Richard Mauditte acted as an interpreter for his friend Richard Ratteclyffe in selling cloth to some Portuguese merchants. Mauditte acknowledged that 'by cause he cawed speke ther langage (he) was a mene for the seyd merchants'. Mauditte was acting as an agent for other merchants.<sup>823</sup> Young men also came to expect linguistic training as part of their apprenticeship. Henry Coyell, who was the son of a Newton Abbot baker, was apprenticed to the Exeter merchant John Trosse but

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<sup>820</sup> J. Vanes, *Education and Apprenticeship in Sixteenth Century Bristol*, Bristol Historical Association, 1982, pp.13, 22.

<sup>821</sup> R. Takeda, 'Literacy in a Business Context: literacy practices of some Bristol merchants in the sixteenth century', *History of Education*, 40:5, 2011, pp.651-671.

<sup>822</sup> TNA, Prob.11/54/11.

<sup>823</sup> TNA, C1/849/14-17.

complained in Chancery that he had not been sent abroad nor had he learned French.<sup>824</sup>

It was in their period of working abroad, often towards the end of their time as apprentices, that young merchants learned some of the more essential skills of the trade. Sacks notes that in Bristol the merchant John Smythe's servants travelled overseas with his goods. Servants or younger merchants were often relied on to act for a group of merchants abroad, though later in the sixteenth century Bristol men were employing professional factors or agents more in ports such as Bordeaux and San Sebastian.<sup>825</sup> Most of our information about merchants acting as factors for their masters derives from disputes about their activities when they were living abroad. The prosperous Exeter merchant John Maynard alleged that in August 1542 he had shipped a variety of cloths worth over £45 in the 'Mary John' of Bridport from Topsham in the charge of George Bruton. They were taken, with some letters to his servant, also called John Maynard and probably his son, in Gibraltar or Marbella. It was claimed in Chancery that Bruton had sold the cloth in Lisbon and then brought soap and oil in Seville, which he had brought back to England. En route he had delivered the letters to William Morys, another of John Maynard's factors at Calais. Maynard alleged that he had not only lost his goods but had also incurred the cost of keeping a servant, in this case John Maynard junior, at Gibraltar for six weeks specifically to receive them. This case gives us some idea of the responsibilities placed upon the young merchant in learning their trade, the opportunities that they had for dishonesty, and the scope of Maynard's business network in supporting three young merchants in his employ abroad simultaneously.<sup>826</sup>

Successful service as a factor abroad was a firm foundation for a business career. Simon Knight, mayor in 1570 and 1579, was a particularly valuable servant for William Hurst. Hooker, in his mayoral biography of Knight, tells us that Hurst 'did employ him both at his side and beyond the seas'<sup>827</sup> and he continued to be his close associate in trading ventures after he had set up his own business.

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<sup>824</sup> TNA, C3/35/19.

<sup>825</sup> Sacks, *Widening Gate*, pp.62, 68; Vanes, *Documents*, pp.98-99.

<sup>826</sup> TNA, C1/958/65-67; 1034/34-35; Hartrich, *Politics*, pp.10, 62, 65.

<sup>827</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.36.

Some merchants employed foreigners to conduct their business abroad for them. The persons entrusted with the dealings were presumably traders who were well known to the Exeter merchants. In the late fifteenth century the Exeter traders Nicholas Hamlyn and John Gomby employed Giles Robert of Mounterles in Brittany to collect debts which were owed to them by John de Cuerr, a merchant of Dalbi in Languedoc. John de Cuerr had been bound for these debts in Bordeaux and Toulouse. Robert was unsuccessful as de Cuerr had been declared a fugitive and therefore the Exeter men were forced to bring the case to Chancery.<sup>828</sup>

After the completion of their training a profitable marriage was of considerable importance in the evolution of a business career. Wealthy young widows were prime targets in the marriage market. John More, who was to be mayor in 1514, married Alice, the widow of William Huntingdon, a prospering Exeter merchant who died in 1509. Both men had originated from Cullompton.<sup>829</sup> Wealthy widows were also found in other towns. Richard Hewet, mayor of Exeter in 1506 and 1513, married Elizabeth, the widow of Richard Best, a Taunton merchant.<sup>830</sup>

### *Working Abroad*

English merchants in the early Tudor period sometimes found it convenient to take up residence abroad themselves in order to conduct their business. The Exeter merchant Thomas Bond was residing in Galicia in North Western Spain at the time of his death. In his will, made in 1501, he refers to himself as an 'englisshe merchaunte neighbour of the citie of Excettor now being in the citie of Groyne' (Corunna).<sup>831</sup> This was unusual, as Childs notes, since English merchants were far less resident in Northern Spain than in Southern Spain at this time.<sup>832</sup> Appendix 12 provides a copy of his will and a biography of Bond with some comment on his trading activities. Before he left Exeter he may have resided in St Pancras as the curate of that parish acted as the joint witness of

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<sup>828</sup> TNA, C1/221/16.

<sup>829</sup> TNA, C1/276/25.

<sup>830</sup> TNA, C1/322/33.

<sup>831</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/13/483. See Appendix 12.

<sup>832</sup> W.R. Childs, "'A paradise hit is to behold': Opportunities for Profit in Spain and Portugal' in C.M. Barron and A.F. Sutton, ed., *The Medieval Merchant*, Harlaxton Society, Donington, 2014, pp.1-19.

his initial will, though it is likely that he lived in Spain for a more extensive period than four years. His son, Robert Bond, is clearly referred to as a merchant in his father's will and is entreated to collect a number of debts which were owed to his father by residents of Pontevedra, Ribidavia and Santiago. Bond also claimed that he possessed gold, plate, jewels and merchandise in the city of Groyne (Corunna), the city of St James (Santiago), the town of Ribidavia and other places in Galicia. He was more specific about his possessions in Corunna and we can therefore deduce that they were probably the most valuable.<sup>833</sup>

No Robert Bond has been traced in Exeter. However in a case dating from 1537 concerning the misdemeanours of a young factor called Robert Harvey from Plymouth, one of the ship's company of the 'Erasmus' of Erith stated that he had visited the house of a certain Robert, an Englishman at Corunna.<sup>834</sup> We can be fairly certain that Thomas Bond spent a considerable amount of time out of the country in the 1490s and early 1500s, probably residing in Northern Spain. He did not take up the Exeter mayoralty, which he would surely have done had he lived continuously in the city as he had been receiver in 1486. In his will he made several bequests to religious institutions in Corunna. He wished that if he died his body should be buried and masses said in the 'monastery of saint domynyk' and Bond also wanted to be buried in the habit of St Dominic, thus indicating his close attachment to that order. He expressed a wish for a stone sepulchre to be set up which was to record his name and the fact that he was an Exonian. His will was witnessed in Corunna by four citizens of the town: a merchant, a saddler, a cordwainer and one man without a specified occupation. Clearly Bond had particularly strong links with the leather trades.<sup>835</sup>

Connell-Smith in his study of Anglo-Spanish trade in the early Tudor era noted that there was ample evidence of English merchants living in Northern Spanish towns, although they were better established in the south in Andalusia, especially in San Lucar de Barrameda, where the Andalusian Company was

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<sup>833</sup> TNA, Prob 11/13/483. See Appendix 12.

<sup>834</sup> Connell Smith, *Forerunners of Drake*.

<sup>835</sup> TNA, Prob 11/13/24.



formed in 1530.<sup>836</sup> No study has been made of any Exeter merchants living in Spain. George Perryman is described in the early 1550s as a servant and factor of John Peter of Exeter, merchant. We know from one Chancery case that he was entrusted with some kersies to deliver to Richard Fowler of Kingswear, the master and owner of a ship then in a Spanish port. Perryman claimed that he had not been paid the full amount by Fowler. As part of his defence he recalled that he had met with Henry Fox, who was the servant and factor of William Page of Cullompton, at the Spanish towns of San Lucar de Barrameda and at Cadiz.<sup>837</sup> This gives us some insights into the networks of Exeter merchants and their servants which must have operated, especially in some of the French and Spanish ports. In 1572 the Exeter city council was concerned that all merchants living abroad should be resident in corporate towns.<sup>838</sup> Merchants came together as partners to organise their trading in other countries.<sup>839</sup>

Corunna served as a first port of call for many English ships on their voyages to Spain. Englishmen seem to have led a fairly safe existence in Spain up until the late 1530s.<sup>840</sup> In 1541 some Exeter merchants complained that they had been imprisoned and had their goods seized in Biscay (though their goods were later recovered) and that they had incurred a loss of over £600 in damages and expenses.<sup>841</sup> By Elizabeth's reign, due to a multiplicity of factors, it was extremely hazardous for English merchants to live in Spain and they had goods seized there in 1569.<sup>842</sup> Exeter clearly played an important role in the Spanish

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<sup>836</sup> Connell Smith, *Forerunners of Drake*, pp.6, 8-9 (noting that English merchants lived and died in Corunna and El Ferrol at this time): Vanes, *Documents* pp.21-22, 97, 128-129, 136-137, 155 (includes the will of the Bristol merchant Robert Coke who died in San Lucar de Barrameda in 1522).

<sup>837</sup> TNA, C1/1461/2-4.

<sup>838</sup> DHC, ECA, AB III f.279.

<sup>839</sup> TNA, C3/70/93. This Chancery case, brought by Francis Gale of Topsham who calls himself a mariner, and who frequently appears in the customs accounts at this time as a master for vessels and as a trader gives us some awareness of the organisation of the Spanish trade. It was alleged that John and Robert Midwinter together with John Dorre, all Exeter merchants, had together engaged Robert Wood as their 'common factor for the sale and employment' of various goods in Seville. He had been given the authority to sell the goods and also to buy wares to export back to England.

<sup>840</sup> Vanes, *Documents*, p.23.

<sup>841</sup> Connell Smith, *Forerunners of Drake*, p.129; *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, Vol.XVI, no.486.

<sup>842</sup> Vanes, *Documents*, p.23; TNA, SP15/14/64. Reasons included mutual customs barriers, restrictions on alien movements, restrictions on the export of bullion, inflation, religious

trade throughout the whole of the reigns of the two Henry Tudors. This role was, however, less than that of London, Southampton or Bristol.<sup>843</sup>

### *Merchant Partnerships*

#### a) Introduction

This section explores the extent to which Exeter merchants co-operated with each other in the organisation of their trading. Studying the nature of partnerships allows further insights into the manner in which merchants operated their businesses and how those businesses evolved. In particular, changes in business practice and comparisons of partnerships in Exeter with those in other ports are investigated.<sup>844</sup>

The Exeter merchants mainly operated as sole traders. However, some worked together on a more temporary basis for one or a few shipments with other Exeter traders, merchants from other towns and other countries. Some merchants arranged formal trading agreements, usually in pairs, which are discussed below. Larger groups of merchants also came together to ship goods. These larger groups prefigured the formation of the Exeter Merchants' Company from 1558. The Exeter Company was not a joint-stock company which ran ventures as a collective. Some Exeter men also worked with shipmasters and though this is not analysed here it is an area which could be profitably explored. Shipmasters were largely involved in trading in fish and their commercial role in fourteenth century Devon has been analysed by Kowaleski.<sup>845</sup>

#### b) Historiography and Sources

Postan, in his study of partnership in English medieval commerce, saw Chancery proceedings and customs accounts as the major sources for historians of the fifteenth century. The former are useful because the English

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differences and also the lessening of a political need on the part of the English for a Spanish alliance due to the relative political weakness of France and the lessening of the Scots' threat.

<sup>843</sup> Connell Smith, *Forerunners of Drake*, p.9.

<sup>844</sup> Such as discussed in Sacks, *Widening Gate*, pp.61-66, 68-72; Vanes, *Documents*, pp.117-122; J. Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1998, pp.226-227; Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*, p.66.

<sup>845</sup> M. Kowaleski, 'The Shipmaster as Entrepreneur in Medieval England' in B. Dodds and C.D. Liddy ed., *Commercial Activity, Markets and Entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Richard Britnell*, Woodbridge, 2011, pp.165-182.

legal system of the time had not developed to recognise partnership in the way that the contemporary Italian one had, and so aggrieved merchants were forced to take cases concerning issues such as partnership disagreements to courts which dealt with related legal matters, such as Chancery.<sup>846</sup> Some of the early Chancery proceedings related to shipping in the late fifteenth century are published in Gardiner's volume on West Country shipping.<sup>847</sup> Childs used partnership evidence from the earlier customs accounts in her study of Anglo-Castilian trade in the later middle ages.<sup>848</sup> However, Jones has shown, using the evidence recorded in the Bristol merchant John Smyth's ledger in conjunction with the customs accounts, that customs officials amalgamated the names of merchants for administrative convenience and this cannot be taken as proof of the existence of partnerships.<sup>849</sup> Kowaleski investigated Exeter merchant partnerships in the late fourteenth century and calculated that about 12% of cargoes were imported by partnerships, though the majority were by ship-masters and their associates rather than merchants.<sup>850</sup> Kermode has identified merchant partnerships in three Yorkshire towns in the early fourteenth century and traced an increase in the fifteenth century.<sup>851</sup> However, comparisons are most possible for Bristol where Sacks notes that trade partnerships were more usually formed for a single voyage.<sup>852</sup> A major exception was the Bristol merchants who formed a partnership to 'Adventure in company' to the Azores for woad in the early 1540s, an agreement which lasted six years. This is interesting in the light of the domination by the Spanish merchants of woad imports into Exeter and suggests that individual merchants could not compete. Sacks sees the more general coming together of merchants for single voyages in Bristol as loose associations or 'trading fellowships' perhaps to meet specific trading conditions, such as the high price of salt. In Bristol the longer partnerships were more commonly formed of a number of associates for general trading rather than joint partnerships of two merchants or

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<sup>846</sup> M.M. Postan, 'Partnerships in English Medieval Commerce' in id., *Medieval Trade and Finance*, Cambridge, 1973, pp.519-549.

<sup>847</sup> Gardiner, *Calendar*.

<sup>848</sup> W.R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, Manchester, 1978, pp.166, 189-191.

<sup>849</sup> E.Jones, *Inside the Illicit Economy*, p.91 and n.10

<sup>850</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.209-212.

<sup>851</sup> Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp.226-230.

<sup>852</sup> Sacks, *Widening Gate*, p.63

for trade in one commodity.<sup>853</sup> In the Exeter Particulars of Customs Accounts the officials bracketed together merchants who shipped wares jointly where they bore shared responsibility for the payment of duties. In the mid-sixteenth century this practice was continued in the Certificate Books and, from 1565, in the Port Books. The Exeter Town Customs contain similar information, though they only cover imported goods. In the light of Jones's research on Bristol discussed above, this cannot be taken as proof of partnerships. A different type of arrangement was recorded when a merchant or ship's master and his company or 'sociis suis' (his friends or allies) was noted by the customer, implying that a group of men were trading together headed by one merchant or ship master. This feature was more commonly recorded in the customs records by the 1560s, though it was a device used in earlier accounts. It could indicate an alternative way in which the Exeter merchant businesses were being perceived or how the trading was being organised.

Problems within trading partnerships led to court actions. The main sources used to study these groups of traders are the Chancery and Common Pleas court proceedings. Some Exeter merchants brought joint debt recovery cases to Common Pleas.<sup>854</sup>

### c) Merchant partnerships 1470-1570

Table 5.1 provides the details of the shipments made by possible merchant partnerships in the period studied. It can be seen that there was a notable increase initially at the end of the fifteenth century and then from the 1530s and further by the 1560s. However, shipments made by possible partnerships were a small percentage of overall recorded shipments through the port of Exeter. A sample based on four accounts from 1492/93, 1499/1500, 1541/42 and 1564/65 suggests a mean of 6%.<sup>855</sup> Although all available national and town customs accounts were used the smaller number of extant accounts for the 1470s and 1480s may affect the lower numbers recorded for that period.

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<sup>853</sup> Ibid. pp. 68-69.

<sup>854</sup> See Appendix 26 which discusses these within the partnership of John Bodley of Exeter and Gilbert Gale of Crediton in the 1530s.

<sup>855</sup> TNA, E122/41/12/14/15; 201/1; 46/11.

**TABLE 5.1: NUMBER OF SHIPMENTS MADE BY POSSIBLE MERCHANT PARTNERSHIPS OR AGREEMENTS RECORDED IN THE EXETER CUSTOMS ACCOUNTS 1470-1570**

DECADE	PARTNERSHIPS INCLUDING EXETER TRADERS	PARTNERSHIPS INCLUDING TOPSHAM TRADERS	PARTNERSHIPS OF TRADERS FROM OTHER TOWNS	PARTNERSHIPS OF ALIEN TRADERS
1470s	11	3	14	2
1480s	4	1	15	1
1490s	34	3	20	2
1500s	12	4	17	2
1510s	6	4	14	2
1520s	4	0	14	3
1530s	70	3	64	10
1540s	30	0	14	8
1550s	54	4	46	1
1560s	94	2	30	0

(Source: TNA, E122s; DHC, ECA TCs)

In the port of Exeter in the Yorkist era possible merchant partnerships were formed but rarely became continuous arrangements. Usually there were two traders but frequently it was three.<sup>856</sup> A number involved the transport of expensive cargoes such as John Taillor and Nicholas Hamelyn's importing of a cargo of crest cloth valued at £50 in 1470. Spreading the cost and risk was probably the main reason for the joint shipping.<sup>857</sup> An increasing number of the local merchants in the 1490s and 1500s were willing to take part in agreements for the shipping of goods for a single voyage often involving high value goods.<sup>858</sup> Table 5.1 shows that there is less evidence for the existence of partnerships in the customs accounts of the 1510s and 1520s. Collaboration

<sup>856</sup> TNA, E122/41/2, 41/3, 41/4, 41/5a; DHC, ECA, TC 10/11, 17/18 Edward IV. Such as that between Robert Bonefant junior and Simon Davy, who brought in wheat and haberdashery ware on two separate ships in March 1472. Nicholas Hamlyn brought in crest cloth with John Taillor on the 'James' of Ottermouth in September 1472 and ockum with John Fenecote in December 1478. John Taillor was most involved in shipping goods jointly with other merchants as he also exported white straits with John Thomas in September 1470 and brought tin into the port with Thomas Bond in June 1475.

<sup>857</sup> TNA, E122/41/4 In the same year a Guernsey ship brought in £60 worth of crest cloth for the ship's master and three merchants.

<sup>858</sup> TNA, E122/41/18. Such as the £80 worth of tin which Richard Hewet and Robert Sherman, both of Exeter, shipped out of the port on the 'Joseph' of Plymouth in August 1494.

between merchants for single voyages continue to be the major type of agreement, like the valuable shipment of 800 kintalls of woad from the Azores, valued at £266 13s 4d jointly imported by Exonians Gilbert Kyrke, Thomas Hoge and Richard Modytt on the 'Margaret Hartt' in September 1529 who, as suggested above, may have bound together to compete with Spanish merchants in the woad trade. The trade in woad from the Azores was very significant within the port of Exeter.<sup>859</sup> At this time there is a significant gap in the survival of the Town Customs accounts.<sup>860</sup> This may help to explain some of the decline in possible agreements noted, though there are still a good range of particulars of account extant.

Sometimes Exeter merchants may have formed accords with shippers from other English towns such as Southampton and Taunton in the late fifteenth century and in the mid-sixteenth century Dartmouth and Bristol.<sup>861</sup> There is little evidence of Exeter merchants forming any shipping agreements with alien traders.<sup>862</sup> The final column of the Table records possible partnerships between foreign merchants using the port of Exeter. These are found throughout the period though they became more noticeable towards the end of the reign of Henry VIII, when their role in the trade was greater, especially in the high value woad imports from the Azores. In 1545 Lionel Pracheo and Henry Consalvus imported the very large quantity of 3,800 kintalls of woad into Exeter. This was the most significant of a number of joint shipments of woad by aliens into Exeter in that year.<sup>863</sup>

Some Exeter merchants did form more long lasting formal partnerships. This is likely where merchants are noted together by the customer for a number of

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<sup>859</sup> TNA, E122/42/11. See later in this chapter for a discussion of this. For the Azores trade: B.W. Diffie, C. Boyd Shafer and G.D. Winus, *The Foundations of the Portuguese Empire 1415-1580*, London, 1977, p.308; Sayers, *The Azores*, p.19; [www.azoresgeopark.com](http://www.azoresgeopark.com). Kintalls are a measurement of 100lbs: Vanes, *Ledger*, p.329.

<sup>860</sup> In the years from 1508 to 1542 only the 1526 account survives. See 1.3.

<sup>861</sup> DHC, TC 10/11, 13/14 Edward IV; TNA, E122/41/12; E190/927/11. Such as Southampton's John Walker and Robert Bluyt importing sweet wine in 1471 and William Sander and Thomas Smyth importing woad, sweet wine and herrings in 1474.. In 1555 Exeter's John and Michael Midwinter imported non-sweet wine with Christopher Wallis from Dartmouth and in 1570 Robert Lambell of Exeter sent out prunes, oil and seck from Exeter with John Car of Bristol on a Plymouth ship but the destination of this re-export was not given.

<sup>862</sup> TNA, E122/201/8 Only one instance has been identified in the customs accounts in 1532 involving Gilbert Kirk, Roger Hill of Taunton and an alien jointly importing crest cloth.

<sup>863</sup> TNA, E122/201/12. See later in this chapter for more discussion of this trade.

years in the accounts. Detailed evidence of two significant partnerships involving local merchants has been identified in the records and is as analysed in Appendices 25 and 26. These were between William Hurst and John Colshill, both of Exeter, spanning the years from 1506 to 1509, and between John Bodley of Exeter and Gilbert Gale of Crediton, covering 1533 to 1535. Hurst and John Colshill junior, in the early years of their trading careers, made some shipments together. Hurst had served an apprenticeship with John Colshill senior in the Colshill household. John Bodley and Gilbert Gale were recorded in the Exeter customs accounts making 22 joint shipments of goods in the period from June 1533 to August 1535. They brought debt cases jointly to the Court of Common Pleas in 1535. These possible partnerships were not as long lasting as those in Bristol suggested by Sacks, however, where one was recorded for over 20 years.<sup>864</sup>

Possible joint ventures by groups of Exeter merchants became more common by the 1530s and 40s as Table 5.1 shows. A change is evident then as rather than two merchants coming together there would often be a grouping of between three and eight Exeter merchants. In the early 1530s they were shipments of high value, often involving the importing of dried fruit.<sup>865</sup> Later the joint shipments were predominantly of non- sweet wine or sometimes iron. This method of shipping had become especially noticeable by the early 1540s.<sup>866</sup> These groupings increased further in the later 1550s and 1560s.<sup>867</sup> The total value of the goods on a few of these shipments was high, reaching as much as £284 and £300 in 1557.<sup>868</sup>

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<sup>864</sup> Sacks, *Widening Gate*, p.69.

<sup>865</sup> TNA, E122/201/8. Such as the 35 tons of fruit valued at £70 brought in on 'Le Lytell John' of Torre by William Hurst, John Seller and John Maynard in November, 1531.

<sup>866</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 33-36 Henry VIII. Such as of iron, cloth and also cargoes of either more miscellaneous or unspecified dry wares, packs and merchandise or the miscellaneous 'merchandise de Flanwnders' brought in in packets and poncheons by William Hurst and four other Exeter merchants in September 1543.

<sup>867</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 1557/58 Book 57; TNA, E122/45/11B. Such as the 50 tons of sweet wine which John Peter, William Hurst, Philip Yard and John Paramore shipped in on 'Le John Cutte' of Dartmouth in February 1557 or the 76 tons of fruit which John Peter, William Hurst, John Midwinter and Edmund Whetcombe brought into the port on 'Le John Ilcum' of Plymouth in January 1558.

<sup>868</sup> TNA, E122/45/12A. These cargoes comprised fruit, sugar, alum, rice and soap brought in by groups of Exeter merchants, headed by the leading ones, on Dartmouth ships in that year.

In the 1560s three-quarters of the possible joint shipments identified in the customs accounts involved Exeter merchants, as Table 5.1 shows, contrasting with about half in the preceding three decades. At this time there was no consistent pattern with regard to which merchants formed the groupings with each other or the numbers involved in each agreement. Agreements may still have been formed to spread the cost of large or high value shipments though less frequently.<sup>869</sup> The men all became members of the new Exeter Merchants' Company. In July 1566 the Company enacted that no trader who was a member, or his factors, servants or apprentices, were to load or freight any ship to Andalusia, Biscay, Galicia or Portugal unless it was as a sole trader or with another member thus showing how the Company was trying to ensure that Company members only shipped with each other.<sup>870</sup>

A few of the customs accounts from the 1550s and early 1560s give us directional information about the embarkation and departure points of some of the ships recorded, which prefigures the method of recording introduced in the Port Books from 1565 onwards. These show that merchants may have been jointly re-distributing goods from Exeter especially to Dartmouth and Plymouth but also to Southampton, Lyme and Looe.<sup>871</sup> Some of Exeter's leading merchants were involved in conjunction with each other such as John Midwinter and William Hurst's sending of linen cloth, canvas, white ware and tin to Plymouth in April and woollen cloth and linen cloth in August, 1555.<sup>872</sup>

#### d) Conclusion

Jones has clearly identified that the evidence of the customs accounts cannot be used to provide evidence of merchant partnerships.<sup>873</sup> Exeter merchants may have formed trading agreements mainly for individual ventures. As suggested above a mean of only 6% of shipments into Exeter have entries

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<sup>869</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 1559/60 Book 57, 1562/63 Book 57, 1563/64 Book 57. These included shipments such as the 650 pieces of fruit and IM (thousand or thousandweight) of soap carried by five prominent Exeter merchants on the 'Paule' of Plymouth in December 1559, the 4M 2C (hundred) canvas and 2C prunes carried by four Exeter merchants on the 'Charitie' in August 1562, and the 825 pieces of raisins on the 'John' of Exmouth by six Exeter merchants in February 1564. The 'Bartholomew' carried as much as 44 tons of iron for a group of seven Exeter merchants in April 1563. Zupko, *Dictionary*, pp.34-35, 168-169.

<sup>870</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.21a; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.177.

<sup>871</sup> TNA, E122/44/9, 45/1, 45/2, 45/5, 45/9.

<sup>872</sup> TNA, E122/45/1, 45/2.

<sup>873</sup> E.Jones, *Inside the Illicit Economy*, p.91 and n.10.



where traders were jointly noted by the customs official. Most Exeter traders shipped cargoes solely. Evidence of more long lasting partnerships is rare though some merchants seem to have combined together over a longer period of time such as Hurst and Colshill and Bodley and Gale. In Exeter these agreements may have been formed to cover trading in a range of goods whereas Amor noted in late-fourteenth century Ipswich partnerships were formed more for the trade in wine rather than cloth or wool and Sacks also thinks partnerships were more common for wine importing in the 1630s.<sup>874</sup> There is no strong evidence for family partnerships such as existed in Bristol.

The involvement of Exeter merchants in any possible trading agreements was relatively low in the Yorkist period, increasing in the late fifteenth century but becoming much more pronounced by the 1530s and more so by the 1560s. The Exeter merchants became the primary group involved rather more so than the traders from other English towns using the port of Exeter. This contrasts with the inter-connectivity which Kermode noted in the Yorkshire ports where partnerships between traders from different towns was common.<sup>875</sup> Even business links between the Exeter and Topsham men were not evident after the death of Thomas Mongey. This may be because mid-sixteenth century Topsham traders were far less prosperous than the Exeter ones.<sup>876</sup> Overall, trading partnerships may have been formed to cover the cost of the shipment of high value or high quantities of goods. A noticeable change was the move from two or three merchants to ones which involved six or perhaps eight traders. These can be directly compared with the 'trading fellowships' noted by Sacks in Bristol.<sup>877</sup> Exeter traders may have been coming together to make joint shipments prefiguring the creation of the Merchants' Company. Through this we can see the formation of a closed trading elite in the port. The Company encouraged more exclusivity in trading amongst its members, in line with the manner in which it was coming to dominate the life of the city.

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<sup>874</sup> Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*, p.66; Sacks, *Widening Gate*, p.69.

<sup>875</sup> Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp.226-227.

<sup>876</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 6/7, 10/11, 13/14 Henry VII; TNA, E122/41/12/, 41/15. See 5.2 for a discussion of the importance of Thomas Mongey of Topsham in the trade of the port of Exeter. Thomas Mongey himself is recorded as being involved in partnerships with Exeter men in 1492 bringing in wine, woad, iron and tin, and in 1496 and 1499 exporting tin and sending out wheat.

<sup>877</sup> Sacks, *Widening Gate*, pp.68-69.

## *Women Traders*

### a) The Position of Women in the Overseas Trade of Exeter

Women played a role in Exeter's trade as the widows of merchants. Although relatively few were identified in the customs accounts it is important to examine them to show how women, who were probably involved in the conducting of businesses before their husbands' deaths, were able to make an important contribution in maintaining the business after their demise. Margaret Drake in particular, though unusual in the extent of her trading, involvement in the Merchants' Company, and role at the centre of Exeter's merchant community, shows the possibilities for a woman to successfully conduct trade at this time.

Thirty-six separate women traders can be identified in the Exeter customs accounts in the period between 1470 and 1570. No women appear in the freedom records at this time. In Exeter the majority of the women traders were only mentioned in the customs accounts on one or two occasions. Typically their role in trade was very small. There were however, notable exceptions to this. In particular there are over 30 references to Alice Togwyll of Taunton and over 20 to Margaret Drake. A few other women traders such as Elizabeth Colshill also had significant listings. Female traders were most evident trading through the port of Exeter in the decades from the 1490s to the 1510s. The other decades have one, or at most three, recorded women traders. In the late fourteenth century women may have been able to take advantage of the difficult economic circumstances to become involved but in this later period, women were participating more at a time of Exeter's economic boom.<sup>878</sup>

The Exeter women were linked with their potential husbands to ascertain if they were widows or connected to members of the civic elite. This has been done using the Exeter freemen's records, extant wills, taxation records and other surviving documents such as property deeds. For two thirds (24) of the women possible husbands were identified. For two of the women traders; Elizabeth Worth (1506) and Margaret Drake (1570), their own wills survive.<sup>879</sup> Twelve had husbands who were part of Exeter's civic elite, of whom six became mayors as the highest civic position they attained. Two of them had husbands who became

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<sup>878</sup> Kowaleski, 'Women and Work'.

<sup>879</sup> TNA, Prob 11/15/13, 11/52/10.

city receivers with a further five identified as serving as city bailiffs. Margaret Drake's first husband became city mayor and her second husband achieved the receivership. Three of the widows had husbands who represented Exeter as its MP. These prominent women were more likely to take over the running of a husband's business after his death.

Some of the women who traded through the port of Exeter were not from the city. In the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries it is evident that Exeter's trading prosperity relied not just on the Exeter traders, or even those from Topsham, but also on the activities of traders from local towns such as Taunton, Tiverton and Cullompton especially and this was true of women as well as men.<sup>880</sup>

Nearly all of the women were only trading in one or two years. This suggests that they took over the overseas trading part of their husbands' businesses in the immediate period after their husbands' deaths. They may then have disappeared from the customs accounts when they re-married or when a son or other male relative took over the trading concerns. However, there are a few women who can be seen trading for longer periods of time. Alice Togwyll from Taunton was trading through Exeter for over ten years, from 1498 to 1509. She made a will in 1509. Her trading clearly had some impact in the port.<sup>881</sup> Exonian Margaret Drake was trading for seven years between 1554 and 1561. Johanna Raleigh is recorded as trading for four years. In a few cases in the earlier part of the period studied, the women are referred to as 'vidua' in the accounts but this is not usually the case. It seems highly likely that all of the women trading were widows and there is no definite evidence of a single woman engaged in overseas trade in this way.

#### b) Margaret Drake

Margaret Drake can be seen as a lynchpin in the elite of early Tudor Exeter. She was the daughter of its patriarch, William Hurst. She was married to two of

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<sup>880</sup> Elizabeth and Johanna Raleigh were from Topsham. Alice Togwyll, the woman most actively involved in the trade, was from Taunton. Tamsyn Lane and Johanna Grynaway were the widows of the two most prominent merchants in Cullompton and Tiverton. Johanna Best, Agnes Netherway and Alice Crabbe were the widows of traders from other prominent local towns, probably Taunton. For Johanna Grynaway see Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>881</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 13/14, 17/18, 18/19, 20/21,23/24 Henry VII; TNA, E122/41/25, 201/3, 201/4.; Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills* (1501-1530), pp.137-138.

the most prominent citizens of the day; firstly Richard Martin (mayor in 1533)<sup>882</sup> and secondly John Drake (receiver in 1548)<sup>883</sup> and three of her sons were to become Exeter mayors A detailed study of her is included as Appendix 31.

She is first mentioned as trading through Exeter in December 1554 when she brought in 25 pieces of crest cloth on the 'John' of Topsham.<sup>884</sup> She remained involved in trading for the next seven years and was carrying on the business of her second husband. Many of the cargoes she imported consisted of crest cloth but also canvas and dowlas (coarser linen cloth).<sup>885</sup> There was some variety in her trading as it included especially prunes and a wide range of manufactured goods probably from France and the Low Countries. The goods she exported were largely undyed cloths though there was also one cargo which included friezes and one including tin.<sup>886</sup> This provides the clearest evidence that women traders were involved in importing and exporting the same wide variety of goods as male traders. She is also recorded in the unusual account of the export of native cloth shipments surviving for 1557/58.<sup>887</sup> Margaret Drake always appears as a sole trader in the customs accounts. However, her shipments were never at the top end of Exeter merchants in terms of value or bulk. Often she shipped goods on vessels where there were a fairly large number of traders, therefore dividing the costs of the voyage. She also often used a ship on which her father William Hurst was also transporting goods. Most of her cargoes were shipped on Topsham vessels, often ones on which Francis Gale of Topsham was the master and he probably worked closely with her.

Margaret Drake was very much enmeshed within the merchant community. She appeared in a list of members of the Exeter Merchant s' Company in 1560 as

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<sup>882</sup> Richard Martin was mayor of Exeter in 1533 and was the second son of Sir William Martin of Athelhampton in Dorset: MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.253, 257; DHC, ECA Book 51 f..342b.

<sup>883</sup> John Drake was a member of the Drake family of Exmouth, being referred to as a gentleman, and to have held the lease of the ferry and passage boat there. His acceptance within the city elite was rapid and by 1548 he was receiver. DHC,ECA, AB II f.47a.

<sup>884</sup> TNA, E122/201/14.

<sup>885</sup> Dowlas was a coarse linen cloth originally from Doulas in Brittany: Vanes, *Ledger*, p.327.

<sup>886</sup> TNA, E122/55/9, 45/12; DHC, ECA, TC 1560/61. In October 1556 she brought in four puncheons of prunes and four cases of glass on the 'Pymrose' and in January 1558 she had five reams of paper on board the 'George' of Topsham. Her last recorded shipment into the port on the 'Bonaventur' in March 1561 included wool cards, prunes, French nuts, boulder, thread, Roane twine, paper, brushes, combs, playing cards, trenchers and soap.

<sup>887</sup> TNA,E122/45/12B.

'Mrs Drake'.<sup>888</sup> By 1568 she was still a member of the Company, as she is noted in their contributors to the Queen's Lottery of that year as 'Mrs Drake widow'.<sup>889</sup> In her will she bequeathed 40 shillings to the Company.<sup>890</sup> She probably retained a loyalty to it after her active trading ceased. By this time her sons were playing an increasingly significant role in the trade of Exeter.

### c) Conclusion

Women shipping goods through the port of Exeter did take up a small share of the total volume of trading in this period. It seems that they were always taking over the trading ventures as widows. In some cases they did continue to trade for a significant time, such as Alice Togwyll for ten years and Margaret Drake for seven years. Women's involvement in the overseas trade of Exeter reached its peak at the close of the fifteenth and the start of the sixteenth centuries. Some showed great aptitude in taking over complex and wide ranging businesses. They rarely entered into trading partnerships with male traders and there is no evidence that they formed any trading partnerships with each other. Women from Topsham as well as other towns, especially Taunton, were notable. Alice Togwyll from Taunton carried the greatest volume of trade through the port overall. Many were the widows of Exeter's political elite and so had some standing in the community before they commenced trading, which would have helped them considerably. They were no doubt trying to preserve the family trading businesses for the next generation. With the formation of the Merchants' Company in Exeter, Margaret Drake was, unusually for the time, able to establish some greater credibility as a member. She was untypical and probably owed much to the political influence of her family. Overall, the role of women in Exeter's trade was greater than that identified by Kermode in the Yorkshire ports, though there was no figure of the stature of Agnes Don-Bretton in Southampton and London.<sup>891</sup> By the end of the period studied fewer women were taking over businesses as the number of participants in the trade lessened

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<sup>888</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.7a.

<sup>889</sup> Ibid., ff. 28b-29a.

<sup>890</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/52/10.

<sup>891</sup> Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp.258, 304; A. Sutton, 'Agnes Don-Bretton, Merchant Stapler, Widow and Matriarch of Southampton and London', *The Ricardian*, 22, 2012, pp.59-93.

and more of the trading life of the city was being organised by the new Company.

## **5.2 The Exeter Merchants and the Overseas Trading Community**

### *Focus, Historiography and Sources*

This section explores the merchants who brought about the significant developments in Exeter's trade at the end of the fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries. The volume of the trade, based on the number of recorded shipments per year and the value of the merchandise, is calculated from the values of the goods imported and exported by each merchant given in the accounts by the customs officials.<sup>892</sup> The importance of respective merchants in relation to one another is expressed in relative rather than absolute values and presented in a series of tables of principal merchants (the ten leading traders in terms of volume or value) in key years in Appendix 1. This section will show how the Exeter merchants were able to supplant the traders from other towns and from other occupations in the port. It will, however, demonstrate that the role of merchants from other places, notably Topsham, Taunton and Tiverton, was essential in Exeter's period of economic prosperity in the late-fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries. Alien merchants, firstly Breton and Spanish in the 1470s and 80s and secondly Portuguese and Spanish in the 1530s and 40s, were also influential in the port. However, the Exeter merchants, initially by the later 1520s, and more decisively by the 1540s, took over control of the trade. These were by then all merchants, not artisans. By the 1550s and 1560s the Exeter merchants were in an unassailable position within the port, but they did not hold a monopoly. Men from the cloth towns of Cullompton and Tiverton headed some from other towns in continuing to play a secondary role in the trading community in the early Elizabethan years. Exeter's merchants also brought the port's coastal trade more under their dominance. In addition, they seized some opportunities to trade through other ports, notably Dartmouth. The

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<sup>892</sup> Full explanation given in Appendix 1. Recorded shipments per year were mainly gained for imports from the Town Customs accounts. Values were taken for imports and exports from the Particulars of Account. The values of wine imports and cloth exports have been calculated using contemporary values largely based on those used by Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp.256-258. Consideration particularly for higher cloth valuations from 1558 were based on comments in T.S. Willan ed., *A Tudor Book of Rates*, Manchester, 1962, pp.xxvi-xxxiii.

reasons for the changes in the composition of the trading community are explored in the following section.

Kowaleski concluded that the Exeter importers were dominated by an elite group of about 20 merchants in the 1380s. She stressed that the Exeter merchants had even greater control of the export trade. She saw a group of about 50 exporting Exeter merchants in the 1390s which was responsible for two-thirds of the value of the exports and formed nearly half of the total exporters. Most of Exeter's merchant oligarchy in the later-fourteenth century was taking part in overseas trade and they were preponderant in the import of woad, iron and wine.<sup>893</sup> This study investigates if these conclusions were also true of Exeter's mercantile elite between 1470 and 1570.

The most significant brief recent investigation of the Exeter traders between 1470 and 1570 was conducted by Childs in her analysis of their composition in 1492/93 arising from her study of the particulars of account of that year.<sup>894</sup> In the port of Exeter she noted a total of 123 English traders of whom 17 were shipmasters, the majority of whom dealt solely in fish. She noted that 106 of the Englishmen importing and exporting through Exeter were small-scale operators trading in goods valued at under £20. Only seven men had total investments in that year of over £200 (imports and exports). She clearly identified Thomas Mongey as the key trader and suggests that the total market value of his goods was probably over £600 in that year. Although she noted him as entering the Exeter freedom in 1492 she erroneously identified him as a Taunton man rather than a Topsham one. She named John Greenway of Tiverton as the next highest ranking trader with the other traders with investments of £200 being John Ector, Thomas Fisher, Thomas Andrew, Richard Undey and Robert Sherman. Fisher was a Taunton man and Ector and Andrew were Exeter tailors

Carus Wilson in her study of Exeter's late-fifteenth-century economic expansion focussed on the John Greenways, father and son, of Tiverton and John Lane of Cullompton but also identified the role of the Taunton merchants as key traders.<sup>895</sup> The most focussed investigation of the Exeter merchants as a group,

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<sup>893</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp 109-110, 234-235, 244-245, 250-255, 328-330; id., 'Commercial Dominance' pp.184-215.

<sup>894</sup> Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade', pp.85-86

<sup>895</sup> Carus Wilson, *Expansion of Exeter*, pp.18-22, 28-29.

however, has been by Hoskins in his article on Elizabethan Exeter. His concentration was very much a social analysis from the 1560s onwards.<sup>896</sup> He calculated that there was a merchant class of about 100 merchants at any one time in Exeter in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. His sources for the study were mainly the Elizabethan probate inventories and John Hooker's writings. Youings, in examining the maritime history of sixteenth century Devon, used the 1581 lay subsidy and identified significant groups of merchants in Exeter, Tiverton and Cullompton, most of whom were exporters of cloth through the port of Exeter. She saw an increase in the size of the Exeter merchant class between the 1550s and the 1590s when as many as five merchants per year were entering the Exeter freedom.<sup>897</sup> MacCaffrey's concern was mainly the Elizabethan and early Stuart eras.<sup>898</sup> He noted the large role played by the bigger merchants, those paying £100 per annum or more in individual payments to customs, who then controlled nearly half the business of the port, though there were still a sizeable number of smaller traders.

A sample of the customs accounts was chosen to explore the composition of the Exeter trading community in more depth as shown in Table 5.2. The selection of the sample takes into account the survival of extant national customs accounts and Town Customs accounts for the same year as this allows us to have the most complete picture. A further consideration was to use accounts, where possible, which cover complete calendar years. It was important to have coverage of the period of boom at the start of the period and equally to be able to analyse the years at the end when we have lists of the members of the Exeter Merchants' Company for 1560 and 1570. It was important to use some post 1565 Port Books due to their fuller material.

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<sup>896</sup> Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants', pp. 163-187. In terms of trade he primarily analysed the ships entering the port in 1597/98 using the port book from that year and there are a few other references to trade in 1580 and 1600.

<sup>897</sup> Youings, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', p.104.

<sup>898</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 160-173 and especially pp. 163, 169, 170 cites the port books of 1565-1640 as sources but he made no use of the Exeter particulars of account from before 1565. However, much of the analysis he presents rests on an examination of Exeter's trade in the years from 1611 to 1638 when he used data from six years and the city freemen entries between 1620 and 1640.



**TABLE 5.2 SAMPLE OF EXETER CUSTOMS ACCOUNTS USED IN STUDYING THE COMPOSITION OF THE TRADING COMMUNITY**

<b>YEARS</b>	<b>TOWN CUSTOMS (DHC,ECA)</b>	<b>NATIONAL CUSTOMS (TNA: E122,E190)</b>
1470s and 80s	1470-71  1476-77  1483-84  1489-90	1470-71 1474-75  1480-81 1482-83  1488-89
1490s and 1500s	1493-94 1497-98  1502-03 1507-08	1492-93 1493-94 1498-99 1499-1500 1502-03  1508-09 1509-10
1510s and 20s	1526-27	1515-16 1517-18 1520-21 1523-24  1528-29
1530s and 40s	1542-43 1543-44	1531-32 1533-34 1534-35 1537-38 1542-43 1543-44 1544-45 1549-50
1550s and 60s	1556-57 1557-58  1560-61 1561-62	1550-51  1557-58 1558-59

	1562-63	1562-63
	1567-68	1567-68
		1569-70

A range of other sources has been used to build up a picture of the Exeter trading community at this time. Central court records such as Chancery and Common Pleas provide some valuable details on the merchants.<sup>899</sup> The extant wills of Exeter traders have been studied as well as those of traders from Taunton, Topsham, Tiverton and Cullompton.<sup>900</sup> Taxation records were also analysed, especially the lay subsidies for Exeter, Devon and Taunton and the Tiverton Tenth.<sup>901</sup> It was possible to study the Taunton traders by examining the list of those in the town who paid fines in the wake of the Warbeck rebellion in 1497.<sup>902</sup> Further insights into the concerns of the leading traders are provided by the Act Books of the city council and Chapter One discusses all the types of sources used.<sup>903</sup>

### *The Merchant Community 1470-1520*

In the 1470s the trading community came from a range of places including Exeter and towns in Devon, Somerset and more distant ports such as Southampton and London. There was always a group of more than 30 Exeter traders participating as Appendix 34 shows.<sup>904</sup> Although many of the overseas traders were merchants a significant number were artisans.<sup>905</sup> The most prolific of the artisans, Richard Geffray, (mayor in 1471) was a tailor.<sup>906</sup> Some Exeter merchants had a wide role like Thomas Bond who brought in woad, crest cloth, tin and a range of other goods and was involved in London and Southampton

<sup>899</sup> TNA, CI and C3 series, STAC 1,2,3,5 series, REQ 2; Common Pleas: <http://aalt.uh.edu/Indices/CPIndices/CP40Indices.html>.

<sup>900</sup> For Exeter, Tiverton, Cullompton and Topsham wills mostly TNA, Prob. 11 series. For Somerset wills Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills*.

<sup>901</sup> Lay subsidies printed in *Tudor Exeter*; Stoate, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*; id, *Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls*. Somerset lay subsidies are in TNA, E179/169/154, E/170/193; DHC, CR557.

<sup>902</sup> Howard, *Fines Imposed*

<sup>903</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I, II, III and IV. See Chapter One.

<sup>904</sup> The Table in Appendix 34 includes the known towns of origin from the customs accounts and where a trader's place of residence is recorded in other records, not just the ones designated in the customs accounts. This gives a fuller picture of the traders.

<sup>905</sup> See 3.3 and 4.3.

<sup>906</sup> Richard Geffray bequeathed a messuage and a garden outside the North Gate to the Tailors' guild as well as making legacies and associated bequests to the fraternity of St John the Baptist: DHC, ECA, MCR m10. See 4.3.

and abroad in Spain.<sup>907</sup> The case of John Taylor, referred to in the customs accounts as a 'tynne marchaunte', denotes some specialisation'.<sup>908</sup> Some key Exeter merchants shipped in predominantly wine and others cloth.<sup>909</sup> In terms of the value of the goods in the 1470s and early 1480s the Exeter merchants were amongst Exeter's key importers and exporters, though the capital which they had invested was significantly lower than the top traders from other towns, as shown in Appendix 1.<sup>910</sup>

Throughout the 1470s there were a small but significant number of traders based in Topsham, headed by Matthew Andrew in 1470/71.<sup>911</sup> The Taunton merchants trading through Exeter were also important in the 1470s. They were the group who most actively seized the new opportunities after 1475 to use the port of Exeter as the major outlet for their cloth exports and the evidence of their trading in the customs accounts increased in the following decades. In 1470 no Taunton men had appeared as major shippers of goods but by 1475 Alexander Tose was one of the major traders. By 1476 Taunton men were a more central part of Exeter's trading community as principal merchants as five men from that town formed part of the top13 traders.<sup>912</sup> Tiverton's best known merchant, John Greneway, appears as a trader through Exeter by 1476.<sup>913</sup> London merchants also played a role in Exeter's trade then.<sup>914</sup> After 1471 they were shipping high

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<sup>907</sup> TNA, E122/41/5a; DHC, ECA, TC 10/11, 16/17 Edward IV record some of Bond's ventures with other merchants. He made shipments on the same vessels as London merchants using a range of ships from Lyme and Southampton in 1470/71. See 5.5 and Appendix 12. For crest cloth see Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, p.3.

<sup>908</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 17/18 Edward IV, TNA, E122/41/5A; E101/338/20. There are some problems of identification particularly with the John Taylors. See Appendix 1.

<sup>909</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 10/11 Edward IV; TNA; E122/42/15. Richard Geffray, Robert Symon and Richard Undey specialised in wine. John Ector and Nicholas Hamlym specialised in bringing in primarily crest cloth.

<sup>910</sup> TNA, E122/41/3, 41/4, 41/5a, 41/6, 41/8. John Taylor (bailiff in 1471 and 1475), Nicholas Hamlyn (mayor in 1499) and John Symon (mayor in 1512).

<sup>911</sup> See Appendix 1. Matthew Andrew brought in goods valued at over £54 and participated in a full range of trading: TNA, C1/51/151; Gardiner, *Calendar*, pp.104-109. He is referred to as a 'merchant of Topsham' in a case brought against him by Henry Denys, a London grocer, concerning a failure to obtain a safe conduct from the French.

<sup>912</sup> See Appendix 1. TNA, E122/41/5A; DHC, ECA, TC16/17 Edward IV.

<sup>913</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 16 Edward IV (also noted by M. Sampson, *A History of Tiverton*, Tiverton, 2004, p.52).

<sup>914</sup> TNA, C1/51/151, 54/8, 65/514; E122/41/3, E122/41/4; DHC, ECA, TC 10/11 Edward IV. They were headed by the grocer Henry Denys. In 1471 he brought in three valuable cargoes of woad as well as alum, white linen cloth, madder, alum, hops and tin. It is likely that Denys was bringing in tin from Cornwall as the cargoes were on ships from Fowey.

value goods into Exeter, many of which were probably re-directed exports from elsewhere. In this first decade studied Southampton merchants had a specific role in Exeter's trade. They did not make large numbers of shipments but some of the most prominent merchants brought in valuable commodities.<sup>915</sup> The customs accounts at this time do not provide any evidence of Southampton merchants being involved in exporting goods through Exeter. The role of traders from other towns often depended on the activities of a single merchant such as John Baker, usually noted as being from Budleigh.<sup>916</sup>

In the early 1480s some of those Exeter men making the most shipments were members of the Tailors' guild.<sup>917</sup> In 1482 a locksmith, tailor, shoemaker and weaver were noted as alternative occupations for some of the key traders.<sup>918</sup> By 1483/4 all the principal Exeter merchants were shipping in a greater variety of goods than in the previous decade, though wine and crest cloth still predominated. By 1489/90 this range of goods and number of shipments had increased further. Merchants who had previously mainly been engaged with cloth imports were bringing in other goods.<sup>919</sup> In the export trade cloth predominated with principal merchants sending especially white straits but also russets, coloured cloths without grain as well as tanned calfskins.<sup>920</sup>

By 1489/90 the Exonian John Symon (mayor in 1512) had by far the largest number of shipments involving imports. He was a merchant as were some of the other men prominent in the trade, as shown in Appendix 1.<sup>921</sup> They had no recorded connections with the tailors. By 1489 the first challenge mounted by

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<sup>915</sup> DHC, ECA, TC10/11, 16/17 Edward IV. Such as Walter James and John Walker, of Southampton, who brought in valuable commodities such as sweet wine, malmsey, Romney wine, woad, tin, alum and soap.

<sup>916</sup> Baker brought in crest cloth, canvas, wine, iron and salt in the 1470s and early 1480s. He was not a notable exporter though he does appear in the records exporting white straits and he was possibly also a ship's master. DHC, ECA, TC 10/11, 16/17 Edward IV; TNA, E122 1474/75.

<sup>917</sup> Such as Richard Geffray: DHC, ECA, MCR m10. See also 4.3.

<sup>918</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1476-1485 p.261 (1482).

<sup>919</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 5/6 Henry VII. For example Nicholas Hamlyn imported woad and malmsey, Thomas Crues madder and Richard Nordon tin and woad. Men connected previously with wine imports, such as Richard Undey, were shipping in salmon, salt and alum. John Taylor brought in wine and ockum.

<sup>920</sup> TNA, E122/41/3. See Appendix 1. The largest exporter was John Taylor who, in addition to white straits and white cloths, sent out cargoes of tin and also pewter vessels.

<sup>921</sup> TNA, E122/41/3. Such as Richard Hewet (mayor in 1506 and 1513) and John Hooker (mayor in 1490).

the tailors to the city elite had been overcome and prominent men were moving from tailoring into trading, most notably Thomas Andrew (mayor in 1504 and 1510) and John Ector (bailiff in 1489).

The nature of Exeter's overseas trading community in the late 1480s is more difficult to determine from the national customs accounts. Two accounts extant from the start of Henry VII's reign were examined but they are in poor condition.

<sup>922</sup> In contrast, 11 Town Customs rolls survive for the 1470s and 80s. The 1488/89 account provides a picture of the recorded importers into Exeter as shown in Appendix 1. The largest group of traders in 1488/89 lived in the city, with Taunton men by far the next largest group. The other significant groups were from Topsham, Dartmouth and Tiverton.<sup>923</sup> The Exeter merchants were being challenged by a whole range of men from other towns making large numbers of shipments, led by Thomas Mongey of Topsham and John Greneway of Tiverton. The principal merchants bringing goods into Exeter, headed by John Symon and a further seven prominent importers were Exeter men.<sup>924</sup> Eleven of the principal Exeter traders can be identified as some of the highest contributors to the Tenth in 1489 with John Hoker paying the largest amount of £1 13s 2d and the three lowest-ranked payers who were traders contributing about 2s each, as shown in Appendix 24.<sup>925</sup> These Exeter traders were, or were to become, members of the city's political elite.<sup>926</sup>

Topsham's Thomas Mongey by the early 1480s was importing goods of a higher value than any other native merchant into Exeter.<sup>927</sup> Mongey was fully involved in the most profitable aspects of the trade, which helps to explain his ascendancy. By the 1480s the Taunton traders were present as a group, but individuals were not playing such a prominent role making numbers of

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<sup>922</sup> TNA, E122/163/2, 163/4.

<sup>923</sup> Although few are designated as Exonians in the accounts they are designated as freemen and can be identified as Exeter men from other sources.

<sup>924</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 4/5 Henry VII.

<sup>925</sup> The Exeter Tenth of 1489 is included in *Tudor Exeter*, pp.1-5.

<sup>926</sup> Of the 19 Exeter men identified as principal merchants in the 1470s and 80s, eight reached their highest civic position as mayor, three as receiver and four as bailiff. In addition four of the men served the city as one of its MPs. Only four Exeter traders cannot be traced taking up a civic office including the next rung down as wardens of Exe Bridge. Three of these four can be identified entering the city freedom.

<sup>927</sup> TNA, E122/41/8; DHC, ECA, TC 1/2 Richard III. In 1483/84 in one shipment he imported 46 bales of woad as well as three other cargoes of woad. Both national and local customs accounts in these years include his shipments of goods from the Low Countries bringing in a very wide range of commodities including Flanders cloth. His known exports were white straits.

shipments or investing large amounts of capital in the trade through Exeter.<sup>928</sup> Tiverton's John Greenway was a more prominent trader through Exeter by the late 1480s though there is less record of him as an exporter.<sup>929</sup> From the surviving Tiverton Tenth for 1488 Sampson concluded that eight of the Tiverton men importing goods into Exeter, noted in the Town Customs, can be found in the borough part of the assessment and that they accounted for a sixth of the money collected. This shows the rise of mercantile wealth there. By comparison with the customs material as a whole it seems likely that the number of traders is a low estimate.<sup>930</sup> There were 11 men making payments ranging from 13s 4d to 4d.<sup>931</sup> Sampson made use of the Exeter Town Customs in his study of Tiverton, but did not use any national particulars of customs. The latter were investigated by Maunder, who confirmed this picture.<sup>932</sup>

By contrast, those other ports which were important in the 1470s played a lesser role thereafter. This accords with the conclusions reached by Nicholls in her study of the economic vitality of Totnes as opposed to Dartmouth during this period.<sup>933</sup> Dartmouth merchants did not make a large number of shipments through Exeter though they brought in a wide range of goods including some which were probably re-directed imports. No Dartmouth men were in the top-ranking merchants measured by the value of goods traded or the number of

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<sup>928</sup> DHC, ECA, TC ½ Richard III, 5/6 Henry VII. The range of commodities brought in by the Taunton merchants contracted from iron, wine and crest cloth to just wine and crest cloth in 1483/4, then further to just crest cloth in 1489. Only Henry Roper and Walter Dolyng appear as woad importers and just Henry Roper was recorded as a key exporter.

<sup>929</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 16 Edward IV (also noted by Sampson, *History*, p.52; Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.3-4). A.E. Welsford, *John Greenway, Cloth Merchant of Tiverton and London*, Tiverton, 1984, pp. 4-9, 14-16; E.R. Carus Wilson 'The Significance of the Secular Sculptures in the Lane Chapel, Cullompton' *Medieval Archaeology*, 1, 1957, pp.104-117. He was a more prominent trader through Exeter by the late 1480s. In 1476 he was importing crest cloth and by 1483/4 also tar, figs and raisins. By 1489 he brought in at least six cargoes of crest cloth as well as madder, iron, wine, bastard (wine), hops, battery and comys (combs) and he was also involved in bringing in cargoes from the Low Countries. There is no record of his involvement in the export trade at this time.

<sup>930</sup> Sampson, *History*, pp.51-53.

<sup>931</sup> Tiverton Tenth in DHC, CR557

<sup>932</sup> Sampson, *History*, p.52; Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.2-7. Sampson has also traced the number of cargoes imported by Tiverton men into the port of Exeter in fifteenth century recorded in the Town Customs from none between the 1420s and 1460s increasing to 17 in 1475, 51 in 1485 and 107 in 1495. This emphasises the growing importance of the Tiverton men in the trading community.

<sup>933</sup> Nicholls, 'Trading Communities'.

shipments made.<sup>934</sup> Southampton traders had disappeared by the 1480s, confirming what is known about its decline as a port at this time.<sup>935</sup> London traders appear less frequently in the accounts too.

The trading community of Exeter also included a significant number of aliens. The national customs official in 1482/83 specifically identified Breton merchants and Spaniards in the particulars of account which provides extra information for that year.<sup>936</sup> Carus Wilson and Coleman, from the Enrolled Customs accounts, identified a significant rise in the number of aliens exporting cloth in 1481/82 and the role of Spaniards between 1483 and 1486.<sup>937</sup> Bretons were six of the top nine exporting merchants in 1482/3 and they were also key importers then.<sup>938</sup>

From Appendix 34 we can see the relative importance of the traders from different towns within Exeter's trading community in the 1490s and 1500s. It shows that in all of the sample years more Exeter traders can be identified using the port than men from any other town. However, this dominance was not great as Taunton provided almost as many traders and for 1502/3 the same number has been identified. There was a very sizeable community of Taunton based merchants with close economic links to Exeter. Topsham men were also very significant traders in these decades in terms of the value of the goods shipped. Dartmouth, Tiverton and Barnstaple men were also closely involved. Londoners were always present in the port. The Appendix further identifies traders from a wide range of towns in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset and as far away as Wiltshire and the more distant Suffolk and Yorkshire. The trading community at this time was a wide network.

Exeter merchants were not the most significant traders in 1492 in terms of the value of their imports as only three Exeter merchants ranked highly. The value of their imports was only 22% of the total and only 28% of the exports, as

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<sup>934</sup> This is surprising in the light of the close connections between the two ports. See 5.5.

<sup>935</sup> C. Platt, *Medieval Southampton: The Port and Trading Community AD 1000-1600*, Boston, 1973, pp 219-222.

<sup>936</sup> TNA, E122/41/8. The value of the customs accounts for this year is also noted by Nicholls, 'Trading Communities', p.50. Also see 2.2.

<sup>937</sup> Carus Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, pp.107-108.

<sup>938</sup> TNA, E122/41/8. The exporters were headed by John Forest with goods valued at over £70, far more than any other merchant. The importers were headed by Roland Sharsherd with by far the highest valued goods of over £112. The imports included salt, wine, non-sweet wine, crest cloth and cumin and a cargo of woad valued at £85.

shown in Appendix 33.<sup>939</sup> Two tailors who became merchants, Ector and Andrew, were also prominent exporters.<sup>940</sup> Again in 1494 only three Exeter traders figured as principal importers and exporters in terms of the value of the goods they shipped, though one was also closely associated with London and another was an Exeter tailor.<sup>941</sup> By 1499/1500 the role of the Exeter men was more evident.<sup>942</sup>

By 1492, however, Topsham's Thomas Mongey had established his position as the premier merchant using the port of Exeter. Then the value of his imports was twice that of the next nearest trader and his exports were almost as far in advance. The same was true of his imports in 1494, though not of his exports. He made significantly more shipments than any other trader.<sup>943</sup> Mongey's relative wealth can be judged by the total cash bequests left in his will of 1513, estimated at £189 6s 3d. In the Exeter wills studied dating from between 1470 and 1520 only Thomas Andrew left more.<sup>944</sup> Mongey's connection with Exeter is further displayed by his bequest of 6s 8d to each of the city's orders of friars. He entered the Exeter city freedom in 1492/93 paying the high entrance fee of £5, which is an indication of how contemporaries viewed his social standing and wealth.<sup>945</sup> John Raleigh, John Squire and William Atwill of Topsham also entered the Exeter city freedom between 1492/3 and 1495.<sup>946</sup> They must have been considered very much part of the city's trading community at this time and were significant enough to be possibly pressured, or felt it to be to their advantage, to join the freedom ranks. Topsham men played a vital role in the expansion of the port of Exeter's trade and the impact of Thomas Mongey was

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<sup>939</sup> TNA, E122/ 41/15; Exeter Cathedral Archives, D and C, Vicars Choral 21739. See Appendix 33. The principal merchants from Exeter were Robert Sherman (receiver in 1511), Richard Undey (mayor in 1498) and John Boteler. Boteler was a prominent trader but does not appear to have taken up civic office. He entered the freedom in 1490 paying a high fine of £2 and so was perhaps a migrant to the city. In 1495 he took up the lease of a tenement outside the South Gate. He is described then as a citizen and merchant.

<sup>940</sup> John Ector (bailiff in 1489) and Thomas Andrew (mayor in 1504 and 1510).

<sup>941</sup> John Danaster (mayor in 1504) probably died in London. Nicholas Hamlyn (mayor in 1499) was a tailor. The other was Richard Undey (mayor in 1498) See Appendix 1.

<sup>942</sup> TNA, E122/201/2; Carus Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, p.145. See Appendix 1. Thomas Andrew brought in the third highest valued imports and the second largest number of shipments. Robert Sherman sent out the highest value of exports made by an Exeter man.

<sup>943</sup> DHC, ECA, 9/10 Henry VII confirmed by the Town Customs account.

<sup>944</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/17/530 (Mongey) and 11/18/30 (Andrew).

<sup>945</sup> *Exeter Freemen*, p.61.

<sup>946</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.



decisive. In 1499/1500 he was still the port's trader par excellence.<sup>947</sup> This was especially true in terms of the very large value of his imported goods. In 1499/1500 he brought in cargoes calculated as worth £1,027, more than any of the Exeter merchants.<sup>948</sup> He also sent out the highest valued volume of exports and made the largest number of shipments in that year. John Raleigh, John Squyer and John Starre from Topsham were also amongst the ranks of the principal merchants then, suggesting the value of the Topsham community to the expansion of the port of Exeter's trade at this time.

In the early 1490s, however, Taunton men were also significant importers and exporters.<sup>949</sup> By 1494 the value of the trade engaged in by the Taunton merchants had increased and a group of seven Taunton men were principal merchants.<sup>950</sup> The Taunton traders continued to be of importance to the port in the following years.<sup>951</sup> We have an insight into the Taunton community in 1497 as then its inhabitants were fined by the Crown for supporting Perkin Warbeck's rebellion. A list survives of the 50 Taunton payers.<sup>952</sup> The leading inhabitants of towns were fined by the Crown according to their ability to pay, irrespective of the extent of their support for Warbeck. A further 15 wealthy people living in the parish of St Mary Magdalene, outside Taunton's gate, were also fined.<sup>953</sup> This provides us with a list which can be compared with the customs accounts to establish how far the civic leaders in Taunton were the same men who were trading. Twenty-five Taunton men were trading through Exeter as well as four of the inhabitants of St Mary Magdalene. All nine of the highest payers in the town were traders through Exeter as well as two of the three highest payers in St

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<sup>947</sup> TNA, E122/201/2.

<sup>948</sup> Ibid.

<sup>949</sup> TNA, E122/41/15; DHC, ECA, TC, 8/9 Henry VII.

<sup>950</sup> TNA, E122/41/18; DHC, ECA, TC, 9/10 Henry VII: Thomas Fysher, John Dyer, John Eston, John Adam, Howell Prynce, John Tose, Matilda Dolyng. Taunton men like Fysher and Eston brought in five or six cargoes in the customs year 1493/94.

<sup>951</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 1/2 Richard III, 5/6 Henry VII, 9/10 Henry VII; TNA, E122/41/12, 201/1, 41/14, 41/15, 41/18. Thomas Fysher, John Togwell and John Dier were principal merchants.

<sup>952</sup> The list is printed in Howard, *Fines Imposed*. It is referred to briefly in R. Bush, *The Book of Taunton*, Chesham 1977, p.29; I. Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491-1497*, Stroud, 2009, especially pp.210-214.

<sup>953</sup> At St Mary Magdalene the west tower of the church was rebuilt between about 1490 and 1510 and this testifies to the prosperity of Taunton at the time. T. Scrase, *Somerset Towns: Changing Fortunes 800-1800*, Stroud, 2005, p.72. Carus Wilson, *Expansion of Exeter*, pp 19-22 traces bequests made for the re-building of the church by the Taunton merchants. The town inhabitants paid fines totalling over £448. The people of St Mary Magdalene paid over £120 in total.

Mary Magdalene.<sup>954</sup> This suggests that the trade through Exeter was of vital economic importance to Taunton at a time when the latter was expanding.<sup>955</sup>

Tiverton traders became increasingly important in the port of Exeter from the 1490s, which Maunder sees as a 'decade of transition' for them.<sup>956</sup> John Greneway is most associated with the growth of the economic fortunes of Tiverton at this time. However, his main focus was on London where he became a member of the Drapers' Company in 1497. Greneway was at the head of a new generation of Tiverton merchants who led the town's traders into the early sixteenth century.<sup>957</sup> Maunder has shown how John Greneway senior and junior were the key Tiverton merchants involved until 1499-1501 when William Selacke, Richard Parkhouse and John Skynner became equally important.<sup>958</sup>

The Town Customs for 1490/91 reveal the extent of alien involvement in the import trade as 23, mostly Bretons from Morlaix, can be identified.<sup>959</sup> There were also French, Normans, Spanish and Portuguese and traders from Antwerp. The customs accounts for 1492 and 1494 include more specific information on the country of residence of alien merchants.<sup>960</sup> Bretons from Morlaix and from St Malo were important as was John Ocheo of Portugal in 1494. In 1497/98 alien merchants were significant importers.<sup>961</sup>

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<sup>954</sup> Of the key Taunton traders through Exeter in 1499 John Dier paid a fine of £20 in St Magdalene and John Togwill paid £10. There is no reference to a fine payment by John Roper in 1497 though Robert Roper paid one of 20 marks. A few years previously in 1493/94 a group of Taunton traders had been amongst the principal merchants trading through Exeter. Thomas Fysher, John Eston, John Adam, Howell Prynce, John Tose and Matilda Dolyng, the widow of Walter Dolyng who died in 1492. Tose was the highest payer of the Warbeck fine in 1497, Fysher, Eston and Laurence Adam also paid. There was no reference to a member of the Dolyng family paying, or to Howell Prynce.

<sup>955</sup> Bush notes that Taunton men were shipping wool and tin from Topsham to Brittany in 1467 and also stresses the importance of the port of Lyme to Taunton's traders: Bush, *Book of Taunton*, pp. 57-58. The role of the port of Exeter in West Somerset's development in the earlier centuries is traced by Scrase, *Somerset Towns*, pp. 63-67, though this mostly rests on Kowaleski's researches.

<sup>956</sup> Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-24. Greenway was also distinct from the other Tiverton merchants in that he operated through other ports such as Dartmouth and Lyme.

<sup>958</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-8.

<sup>959</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 5/6 Henry VII.

<sup>960</sup> TNA, E122 201/1, 41/15, 41/18.

<sup>961</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 13/14 Henry VII.

In terms of men from other English ports Stephen Danyell was a principal merchant in 1494, 1499/1500 and 1502/3. The customer initially associated him with Charmouth and later, with Lyme.<sup>962</sup> North Devon men rarely figured as significant traders at this time though an exception was John Andrew from Barnstaple in 1497/98.<sup>963</sup>

In the first decade of the sixteenth century Exeter men did not control the trade but continued to work alongside prosperous men from other towns to maintain high levels. The tailor John Scrivener was the most significant Exeter-based importer and exporter in 1502/03. Between 1507 and 1509 the merchant Robert Sherman shipped the highest valued volume of goods in and out. By 1515/1516 John Bodley as an exporter and mercer and John Colshill as an importer headed the group.<sup>964</sup> Then Topsham men were still responsible for bringing in the greatest number of shipments. Thomas Mongey brought in the most with John Starre and John Squyer the next highest.<sup>965</sup> Mongey shipped the top valued exports in that year too. He retained the position at the end of the decade.<sup>966</sup> In 1515/1516 traders from Topsham and Exmouth were still significant.<sup>967</sup>

The Warbeck conspiracy had little serious impact on the economic fortunes of Taunton's leading townspeople as 1502/3 marks the zenith of the influence of Taunton traders within the port of Exeter. As importers John Adam, John Togwyll and John Roper all brought goods into Exeter valued in total at between £440 and £580.<sup>968</sup> Roger Hyll headed a group of Taunton men who exported

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<sup>962</sup> TNA, E122/41/18, 201/2, 41/25.

<sup>963</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 13/14 Henry VII.

<sup>964</sup> TNA, E122/42/1, 201/5, 42/2; DHC, ECA, TC 23/24 Henry VII.

<sup>965</sup> DHC, ECA, TC, 18/19 Henry VII.

<sup>966</sup> TNA, E122/201/4; DHC, ECA, TC 23/24 Henry VII. The Town Customs reveal that Roger Michell from Topsham and Thomas Mongey's son, Matthew, were also part of a small group who were bringing a large number of shipments through the port of Exeter. Roger Michell brought the largest number of recorded cargoes into the port in 1507/08

<sup>967</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 23/24 Henry VII; TNA, E122/42/1, 201/5. Roger Hyll from Taunton and Roger Michell from Topsham were principal exporters. John Drake from Exmouth also made significant exports in the latter year.

<sup>968</sup> TNA, E122/41/25; DHC, ECA, TC 18/19 Henry VII. Roger Hyll, John Dyer and Alexander Newton from Taunton also brought in goods valued at between near £290 and £380. Five years after the rebellion in 1502/3 John Roper, John Togwyll and John Dyer were all significant traders in that year as were Alexander Newton (the third highest payer in 1497 at £40) and Roger Hyll (who paid 10 marks in St Mary Magdalene in 1497 and was to become Taunton's most prolific trader in the following years).

valuable cargoes in that year. This continued at the end of the decade, and up to 1515/16, as Hyll remained by far the leading Taunton trader.<sup>969</sup>

The new Tiverton men were evident at the head of the trade, especially the obscure Richard Parkhouse, by 1508/09.<sup>970</sup> This is confirmed by 1515/16 when the particulars of customs show the increased influence of the Tiverton merchants as Richard Parkhouse and John Skynner exported the highest valued goods.<sup>971</sup> Parkhouse, in particular, has been presented by Maunder as being of as much importance as the Greneways in developing Tiverton's trading.<sup>972</sup> There are, however, anomalies in the picture of the development of the trading community such as in 1515/1516 when the highest-valued imports were brought in by Thomas Hynde, possibly a London merchant.<sup>973</sup>

### *The Merchant Community 1520-1542*

A major turning point in the composition of the trading community is evident by the 1520s as Exeter merchants became more prominent in the trade. Appendix 34 shows the places of residence identified by the town customer as well as others identified from the lay subsidies. By 1526/27 the largest group was clearly the 31 Exeter traders. By far the next most significant number was from Taunton. Other notable traders came from Totnes, Tiverton, Topsham and Colyton. The importance of the trading community can be assessed by comparison with the lay subsidy returns of the mid-1520s. In Exeter 31 people were assessed on over £100 worth of goods, the highest number in Devon. Twenty-one of these men were recorded as traders in the customs accounts and another was the widow of a merchant. In Exeter 12 of these men were assessed on goods worth over £200, with ten of these recorded as traders, whilst another was the merchant's widow Anna Crugge. This is all a clear indication of the key role of trade in the city's fortunes.<sup>974</sup> In terms of the value of the goods, however, Exeter traders were not dominant. In 1523/24 the total

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<sup>969</sup> TNA, E122/42/12; 201/5. In 1515/16 Roger Hyll from Taunton and Roger Michell from Topsham were principal exporters. John Drake also made significant exports in this year.

<sup>970</sup> His lay subsidy assessment is low in relation to the value of the goods which he traded Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.8-10.

<sup>971</sup> TNA, E122/201/5.

<sup>972</sup> Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.6-24.

<sup>973</sup> TNA, E122/201/5.

<sup>974</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp. 35-44. The total assessed at over £100 was far more than the next towns, which were Plymouth and Totnes, though both of these places had individuals with higher assessments than any Exeter resident. See Youngs, *Early Tudor Exeter*, p.11.

value of the export trade through the port was £4,626.<sup>975</sup> However, Exeter men sent out goods valued at only £1,252 (27%) compared to other English merchants exporting £2,938 (64%). The share of the alien merchants was just £436 (9%).

Study of trading activities in the 1520s can be deepened by also considering the information recorded in the isolated Town Custom of 1526/7. Exeter merchants were successful then as eight of the ten principal merchants, in terms of the number of shipments, were from the city. Not all of the Exeter traders were merchants, though the tailors played far less of a role in the overseas trade.<sup>976</sup> By 1528/29 a significant feature was the large number (23) of merchants with recorded imported goods valued at over £100, indicating that merchant wealth was increasing.<sup>977</sup> Nearly half of them were Exeter men though they tended overall to be bringing in less than £150 worth of goods. The major exceptions were Gilbert Kirk who recorded the largest valued imports in that year (£541) and William Hurst (£320).

By 1520/21 William Hurst was, for the first time, Exeter's most significant exporter though not importer. He was to serve as mayor five times and was to become the patriarch and premier merchant of the city.<sup>978</sup> By 1523/24 Hurst was the principal exporting merchant and the value of this was £219 or 4.6% of the total recorded value of the goods leaving the port. His cargoes were composed of Devon tin and cloth and one included madder. He brought in goods worth £138 (3.87%). Hurst was more involved with the importing of manufactures including Holland cloth, combs and cards which suggests both Low Countries and French goods. He also imported some woad. The Town Custom of 1526/27 confirms that Hurst dealt in a wide range of merchandise including one cargo shipped on the 'George of Andwarpe,' further indicating his role in the Low Countries trade.<sup>979</sup>

Gilbert Kirk was recorded as having the largest value of imported goods in 1520/21, though his exports were less significant. Kirk (mayor in 1531 and

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<sup>975</sup> See Appendix 33.

<sup>976</sup> See 3.4.

<sup>977</sup> TNA, E122/42/11.

<sup>978</sup> Hurst was mayor in 1524, 1535, 1545, 1551 and 1561.

<sup>979</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 18/19 Henry VIII. See Appendix 1 for William Hurst's role as a principal merchant.

1539) was the other major Exeter merchant of this time. In 1520/21 he brought in goods worth £156 (4.37%) which included a wide range of commodities but most frequently crest cloth, wine and iron. There were not so many shipments of manufactures, which could suggest that he was more involved in trade with the Iberian ports.<sup>980</sup> The Exeter trading group in 1523/24 also contained a significant number of middling traders.<sup>981</sup>

Barry has concluded that in the sixteenth century Tiverton, Crediton and Taunton were the next largest towns in the region.<sup>982</sup> The key role of the Taunton traders rested on the cloth trade. Roger Hyll continued to be the most significant exporter though John Trott did have imported goods of a higher value recorded.<sup>983</sup> Hyll was the wealthiest Taunton inhabitant throughout the 1520s, 30s and early 1540s and the most significant Taunton trader through Exeter. Hyll headed the town's 1525 lay subsidy being assessed on £160 worth of goods and its leading trader.<sup>984</sup> For Taunton the 1525 lay subsidy shows the importance of the trading community there. Ten of the inhabitants (60%) were assessed to pay on £40 or more, and six of them appear in the customs accounts.<sup>985</sup> In 1523/24 Hyll exported £215 worth of goods or 4.51% of the total through the port, composed of cloth and mainly Devon tin. He also brought in goods valued at £122 (3.42%) which included shipments of crest cloth and canvas as well as some woad of lower value.<sup>986</sup> In addition he imported eight shipments of crest cloth in 1526/27, which further supports the notion that the trade of the Taunton merchants had a much narrower focus. He did, however, bring in 30 bales of woad in one cargo. Taunton shippers mainly imported crest cloth such as in April 1527 when eight Taunton traders, all designated as such by the customer, brought in just crest cloth.<sup>987</sup>

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<sup>980</sup> Connell Smith, *Forerunners of Drake*; Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade*.

<sup>981</sup> TNA, E122/42/7, 42/8. They included one man who exported goods worth over £200, two over £100, seven over £50, seven over £10 and four men exporting goods worth less than £10.

<sup>982</sup> Barry, 'South West', p.81.

<sup>983</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>984</sup> TNA, E179/169/154.

<sup>985</sup> TNA, E179/169/154. In total the community was assessed to pay £67 10s in taxation, relatively high compared to most towns and thus an indication of the prosperity which helped its merchants to play such an important role in the expansion of the port of Exeter.

<sup>986</sup> TNA, E122/42/7, 42/8.

<sup>987</sup> DHC, ECA, TC, 18/19 Henry VIII.

Traders from Tiverton continued to be of importance in the early 1520s. The Tiverton subsidy return for 1524 was headed by its leading merchants John Greneway, William Selake, John Skynner and Richard Parkhouse.<sup>988</sup> These were the only Tiverton men who appear as principal merchants through Exeter at this time as shown in Appendix 1. John Skinner was recorded sending out the highest valued exports and also the second largest valued imports in 1520/21.<sup>989</sup> Richard Parkhouse and William Selake of Tiverton were also principal exporters.<sup>990</sup> Selake died in 1524.<sup>991</sup> John Greneway of Tiverton also imported high valued goods though he was referred to by the customer as a citizen of London.<sup>992</sup> Richard Parkhouse was the principal Tiverton merchant in the 1520s.<sup>993</sup> The Tiverton merchants were exporting and importing large amounts of cloth, as investigated and corroborated by Maunder in his study of the Tiverton cloth trade.<sup>994</sup>

In 1523/24 Matthew Mongey, the son of Thomas Mongey, Topsham's leading merchant, was recorded for the last time. This marks the end of the highly influential role which the Mongeys played in the expansion of Exeter's trade.<sup>995</sup> Topsham's new leading traders, Richard John and Henry Tanke, (both

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<sup>988</sup> Stoaite, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*, pp.47-49. They were assessed on £150, £100, £66 13s 4d and £40 respectively), the four highest assessments in the town. As a parish Tiverton was assessed to pay £53 3s 9d in taxation: Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>989</sup> TNA, E122/42/6. Sampson states that John Skynner held extensive lands in Elmore in Tiverton (*History*, p.60). Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.8, 9, 10, 12, 20 notes Skinner's trading and his commemoration at St Peter's church, Tiverton.

<sup>990</sup> TNA, E122/42/6. Parkhouse brought in over £100 worth of goods in that year.

<sup>991</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/21/435. The comments made by Sampson on Selake derive from the contents of his will: Sampson, *History*, p.60. Maunder notes Selake as a borough juror, his charity and commemoration in the town: Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.6, 7, 12, 20, 24.

<sup>992</sup> TNA, E122/42/6; Welsford, *John Greenway*.

<sup>993</sup> TNA, E122/42/7, 42/8, 42/11; DHC, ECA, TC 18/19 Henry VIII. See Appendix 1.

Parkhouse was the premier importer in 1523/24 when he brought in goods valued at £203 (5.69% of the total) most of which was crest cloth. By 1524/25 his exports were worth £333, or 7.07% of the total port figure. He exported mainly cloth but also some lead and Devon tin. He further imported nine cargoes of crest cloth in 1526/27 with some iron and in 1528/29 brought in goods worth £248. Richard Parkhouse is obscure in the records. Sampson notes that his origin is never stated: Sampson, *History*, p.60. His lay subsidy assessment seems low in relation to the value of the goods which he traded: Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.6, 8-10, 12, 14, 20-21, 23.

<sup>994</sup> Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.11-12, 20-24.

<sup>995</sup> Stoaite, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*, pp.77, 237. The Mongeys importance is further emphasised by the total assessed goods in the 1524 lay subsidy for Matthew's widow, Joan, and her seven children which amounted to £88, significantly higher than any other Topsham household, though the 1523 Anticipation includes some higher figures for Topsham. In the Anticipation Nicholas Langmede and Matthew Mongey were assessed on £100, and Roger Mychell and Nicholas Sketon were assessed on £50. All were traders though Langmede was more associated with Dartmouth.

assessed at £30 in the lay subsidy) were of less prominence.<sup>996</sup> The next highest group assessed on between £20 and £30 nearly all appear as traders in the customs accounts.<sup>997</sup>

In 1528/29 valuable imports were brought into Exeter by Cullompton's best known early Tudor merchant, John Lane. He died in this year and the customs records clearly note the continuation of the trading by his widow, Tamsyn.<sup>998</sup> Overall the Cullompton merchants were not as important as those from other towns, or as they were to become later.

In Dartmouth two men were assessed at over £100 for the lay subsidy and both were recorded as trading through Exeter. In wealthier Totnes three of the five men assessed at over £100 were also trading via Exeter. None of these men became principal merchants and probably Exeter trade was of secondary importance within their businesses.<sup>999</sup> The majority of the other traders bringing goods into Exeter in 1526/7 were from Devon towns, although there were also two men from Southampton, one from London and one from Portsmouth.

Some alien merchants trading through Exeter were of increasing importance. Their cargoes were largely highly- valued woad from the Azores brought by Hispanic merchants as shown in Appendix 1. They were less significant in the export trade and mainly shipped out cloth'.<sup>1000</sup> By this time woad was referred to as 'kintalls of pastel de insula' by the customer, indicating that it was being brought from the Azores. Woad was shipped in occasionally by Exeter and

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<sup>996</sup> They were headed by Richard John. He was assessed on £30 worth of goods in the lay subsidy of 1524 in Topsham: Stoate, *Devon Lay Subsidies*, p.77.

<sup>997</sup> Nicholas Sketon and Peter Taylor were assessed on £26 13s 4d, John Starre, Roger Michell and John Will on £20 (though Richard Horowe, assessed on £23, does not appear in the customs accounts as a trader)

<sup>998</sup> Carus Wilson, 'Significance', pp. 104-117; TNA, E122/42/11.

<sup>999</sup> Nicholls, 'Trading Communities', pp.142-144, 158; Stoate, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*, pp.190-191, 195-196.

<sup>1000</sup> TNA, E122/42/7, 42/8. In 1523/24 Casper Consalvus was the leading alien merchant, exporting goods worth £124 (2.6% of the total) including broadcloths, cloth, friezes and tanned calfskins. He brought in goods valued at £200 (5.61% of the total). All of this was in one shipment of 800 kintalls of 'gualde de insula' (island woad) in October 1523 on 'Le San Sebastian'. Consalvus was not identified as a trader at the time: Connell Smith, *Forerunners of Drake*; Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade*.



Taunton men but mainly by alien merchants. At the end of the 1520s the consignments brought in by aliens were less highly-valued than later.<sup>1001</sup>

The dominance which was gradually being established by Exeter merchants continued to develop but in the early 1530s it was far from established. No Town Customs accounts survive for the 1530s. However, the particulars of customs accounts for 1531/32 provide some valuable information. More capital was being invested by the merchants in the importing of goods into Exeter in this year. The principal importer and exporter was Gilbert Kirk.<sup>1002</sup> His imports can be valued at £864, nearly twice that of the next most significant Exonian, William Hurst. Most of the main traders in terms of the calculated value of their imports were Exeter men though they were not as dominant in the export trade. By 1537/38 the principal merchants were nearly all Exeter men.<sup>1003</sup> In that year the Exeter exporters were led by Gilbert Kirk (£472) and William Hurst (£381). Ten more Exeter men sent out recorded goods valued at over £100 in that year. The recorded value of imports in 1537/8 was very high as 31 men brought in goods with a value of over £100. They were headed by William Hurst (£599) and Gilbert Kirk (£480).<sup>1004</sup>

Taunton's Roger Hyll continued to be a key trader in the port in 1530/31 exporting goods valued at £380 and importing goods valued at £293.<sup>1005</sup> By 1537/38, apart from the Exeter men, only Hyll remained as a substantial exporter.<sup>1006</sup> Other prominent traders included two men from Taunton, two from Dartmouth and two from Topsham.<sup>1007</sup> Aliens were significantly involved as Bastiano Pers brought a massive shipment valued at £666 and Simon Nunys exported goods valued at £227. Youings in her study of Devon's trade noted that alien involvement increased in the late 1530s and early 1540s for reasons

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<sup>1001</sup> TNA, E122/42/6, 42/7, 42/8, 42/9, 42/10, 42/11, 43/2. The exception was the £366 worth of woad from the Azores brought in by John de Pott, see 5.3.

<sup>1002</sup> TNA, E122/201/7.

<sup>1003</sup> TNA, E122/43/11.

<sup>1004</sup> Ibid. John Maynard (receiver in 1545) also brought in a high value of goods (£347) Three other Exeter men's imported goods exceeded £200 in value. John Seller (bailiff in 1528), John Blackaller (mayor in 1530, 1536 and 1548) and Roger Blackall (bailiff in 1533).

<sup>1005</sup> TNA, E122/201/7, 201/8.

<sup>1006</sup> TNA, E122/43/11. He sent out the third highest valued goods (£266).

<sup>1007</sup> John Adams and Thomas Ayer from Taunton, William Hullond and Thomas Gaell from Dartmouth, Robert Facey and Roger Fowler from Topsham, John Laughner was possibly from Totnes, Thomas Colcott and William Halsse were from unidentified places.

which are not easily explained.<sup>1008</sup> In 1537/38 five aliens were recorded bringing in goods valued at over £100.<sup>1009</sup> Four of them certainly had Hispanic names and were importing woad. Carus Wilson and Coleman noted a significant increase in alien shipments of cloth from Exeter in 1538/9 and 1544/45.<sup>1010</sup>

### *The Merchant Community 1542-1570*

An acceleration of the changes was becoming more evident by the 1540s when the merchant community was headed ever more clearly by the Exeter men. In 1542/43 its total size had reduced as 85 importers and 65 exporters were recorded in the particulars of customs.<sup>1011</sup> The largest group were Exeter men (35 or 41% of importers and 25 or 38% of exporters). There were 32 other English importers of whom 20 were bringing in fish, the largest group being seven men from Kenton on the Exe estuary. Nearly all of these English importers were from Devon. In terms of the value of the trade in that year the Exeter traders brought in an estimated 52%, alien merchants 34% and the other English merchants 14%.<sup>1012</sup> The Exeter traders' share was less in the export trade, 32%, with other English merchants 44% and aliens 24%. The predominance of the Exeter merchants was not yet established either in the number of traders or the value of the trade.

By the 1540s, however, most of the principal merchants were from Exeter. Gilbert Kirk sent out 7.45% of the total value of the port's exports and John Midwinter brought in the greatest value of imported goods (6.45%). Town Customs accounts survive for the earlier 1540s and provide information on the imported goods.<sup>1013</sup> In 1542/43 and 1543/44 they show that the largest number of import shipments was made by John Maynard. The second largest importer was John Midwynter (mayor in 1547 and 1554). The particulars of customs for 1542/43 confirm this picture of Exeter leadership in the import trade.<sup>1014</sup> In this year all the principal merchants were either Exeter men or alien merchants. Gilbert Kirk was the principal exporter though the value of the goods was low.

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<sup>1008</sup> Youings, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', p.101.

<sup>1009</sup> TNA, E122/43/11.

<sup>1010</sup> Carus Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, pp.118-119.

<sup>1011</sup> TNA, E122/43/14; DHC, ECA, TC 33/34, 34/35 Henry VIII.

<sup>1012</sup> See Appendix 33.

<sup>1013</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 33/34, 34/35, 35/36 Henry VIII.

<sup>1014</sup> TNA, E122/43/14.

However, the Exeter trading group was largely composed of middling merchants as 14 of them exported and imported goods valued at between £10 and £50 in that year. The next largest group were trading in goods valued at between £50 and £100. The Town Customs accounts confirm the ascendancy of the Exeter traders with regard to the number of shipments brought into the port per year. The trading picture was much the same in the late 1540s when nearly all of the principal merchants importing and exporting goods into the port were Exeter men. They were headed by William Hurst, Richard Strobridge and John Blackaller.<sup>1015</sup>

The Exeter lay subsidy for 1544 shows the dominance of Exeter's traders within the city.<sup>1016</sup> In that year William Hurst was the highest assessed citizen, paying on 400 marks worth of goods (£266 13s 4d). Four men were assessed to pay on over £200 worth of goods and three of them are recorded as traders in the customs accounts. Within the next group of men, assessed on over £100 worth of goods, two-thirds of them (six of nine) were traders. In total 48 men were assessed in Exeter to pay on goods or lands assessed at over £40 and 26 of them appear as traders in the customs accounts.

Significantly, the Exeter traders were also beginning to act more collectively. This is evidenced by the parliamentary act authorising the clearing of the River Exe from obstructions at the city's behest in 1540 and the attempts to raise funds for the scheme in 1546, which MacCaffrey saw as the beginnings of the Exeter Canal project.<sup>1017</sup> Exeter men who emerged at the top of the trade in this period included some of the founders of the Exeter Merchants' Company in the next decade.

Of the merchants from other towns who sent out highly-valued exports the largest shipments were made by George Cockram of Cullompton who was responsible for 3.6% of the value of the port's exports in 1542/43.<sup>1018</sup> The Cullompton men were not of the same economic stature as John Lane earlier in the century, but the names of the trading families of Cockram, Parris and Trott

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<sup>1015</sup> TNA, E122/44/4.

<sup>1016</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.45-54.

<sup>1017</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp 127-128.

<sup>1018</sup> TNA, E122/43/14.

are inextricably linked with the rising fortunes of the town.<sup>1019</sup> In 1543 there were 28 inhabitants assessed at over £20 in Cullompton, headed by Henry Parris at £66. Seven of them appear in the customs accounts. This suggests that Cullompton was economically burgeoning at this time.<sup>1020</sup>

Taunton men do not figure as principal merchants in the 1540s. In the 1544 lay subsidy they were headed by Roger Hyll, assessed on £400 worth of goods. He died in 1546.<sup>1021</sup> Other Taunton men were paying on lower sums and even those from merchant families were assessed on only £40.<sup>1022</sup> This suggests that Taunton by the 1540s was facing economic problems. The role which the Taunton merchants had played at the top of the Exeter trading community had ended, replaced to some extent by Cullompton men.

The Devon lay subsidy returns for the mid-1540s help to identify the place of residence of some of the other traders. In some towns, such as Plymouth, Totnes and Barnstaple, merchant elites were in the ascendant. Wealth evaluations were low overall in both Dartmouth and Tiverton, suggesting some economic difficulties there.<sup>1023</sup> Maunder has shown how the Tiverton merchants turned increasingly to London to take up the new opportunities to market their cloth there between 1530 and 1570. The town's former leading merchant Richard Parkhouse died after March 1530 and John Greneway also died in late 1529 or early 1530.<sup>1024</sup> Tiverton men disappeared as traders through the port of Exeter between 1542 and the early 1560s.

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<sup>1019</sup> For brief reference to these men see M. T. Foster, *A Short History of Cullompton*, Tiverton, 1964, pp.9-10, 15; B. Little, *Exeter, Crediton, Cullompton, Exmouth, Ottery St Mary, Tiverton and Topsham*, London, 1953, pp.137, 141; Sampson, *History*, p.71.

<sup>1020</sup> Stoate, *Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls*, pp.50-52.

<sup>1021</sup> TNA, E179/170/193; Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills*, 1531-1558, pp.82-83. In his will, proved in 1546, he bequeathed £100 to his daughter Alice and stipulated that £100 was to be distributed to the poor at his burial and month's mind. Bush also comments on his wealth and support for a school in Taunton. Bush, *Book of Taunton*, pp.57, 123.

<sup>1022</sup> TNA, E179/170/193; Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills*, 1531-1558, pp.44-45. John Adam, John Pope, Hugh Wetherston and John Roper were from merchant families. The lay subsidy for Taunton gives a list of 57 persons paying in the town and a total paid of £45 15s William Hurst, Exeter's leading citizen, was assessed on 400 marks (£266 13s 4d).

<sup>1023</sup> Stoate, *Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls*. See 5.5.

<sup>1024</sup> Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.12, 20-24, 28-39. *Ibid.*, pp.6-9, 12, 20, 23, 27, discusses Parkhouse's trading and argues for his considerable role being evidenced in the architectural survivals at St Peter's church, Tiverton. The John Greenways have also been reappraised by Maunder, pp.3-6, 8, 13-24, 28.

In 1542/43 there was a significant alien presence in the trade with 18 listed importers and 22 exporters. The largest group was from Morlaix. However, the alien merchant Gabriel Formoso brought in highly-valued imports of woad whose value was 21.6% of the total imports in 1542/43, as shown in Appendix 1. The name suggests that he was Portuguese.<sup>1025</sup> In July 1545 William Webbe and John Whitehorn, both of Exeter, were accused of receiving £1,080, the money of Henry Alveros, a supposed Portuguese Jew. This is a further indication of the large amounts of money involved in the woad trade, in which some Exeter merchants participated.<sup>1026</sup> The role at the top of the port's trade was only rivalled by Lawrence Bowerman in 1549/50. He was resident in San Sebastian in 1545 but had connections with Exmouth and Hemyock (eight miles north of Honiton).<sup>1027</sup>

By the early 1550s the principal exporters were nearly all Exeter men, headed by William Hurst and his son and son-in-law (John Hurst and John Drake). The principal Exeter importers were William Hurst, John Strobrigge and Richard Strobrigge. The Strobridges were from Colyton and three members of the family became prominent in the Exeter trade.<sup>1028</sup> The woad trade was usually controlled by the alien traders. However, in September 1552 the 'Charite' of Dartmouth brought in 650' kintalls ilond wode' valued at £216 13s 4d shipped by John Strobridge along with some sugar and non-sweet wine.<sup>1029</sup> This is a rare

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<sup>1025</sup> TNA, E122/43/14.

<sup>1026</sup> *Letters and Papers Henry VIII*, Vol 20, Part 1, no.1292, Vol 20 Part 2, no.980, Vol 21, Part 1, nos.11, 21 and 24. The letters are dated between 28 July 1545 and 7 January 1546. Five letters sent from the Privy Council over the next six months survive. They concern the summoning of the Exeter men to London, testimonials from Antwerp declaring that Alveros was not Jewish, and a certification of the quality of the woad sent by John Whitehorn, which was a matter of dispute between Webbe and Alveros.

<sup>1027</sup> TNA, E122/44/4; Connell Smith, *Foreunners of Drake*, p.169. Laurence Bouerman witnessed a notarial certificate in San Sebastian along with certainly one Bristol apprentice.

<sup>1028</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, p.39; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.74; DHC, ECA, AB II f.101a; TNA, C1/1270/98-101; *Exeter Freeman*, p.77; W.G. Hoskins, *Devon*, London, 1954, p.109; DHC, Exeter St Petrock PR1. The elder John Strobrigge held property in St Olave in the 1520s. Probably a junior John Strobridge married the widow of the tailor-draper Thomas Hunt (mayor in 1537) in January 1549. In 1549 he was given a choice by the city council of paying to enter the freedom for the fine of £6 13s 4d or paying a high quarterly shop fine of 13s 4d. He entered the Exeter freedom five months later paying a lower fine of £5. He was a city bailiff in 1551. He was involved in legal disputes concerning payments for tin. Richard Strobrigge, possibly a brother, entered the city freedom in 1547 paying a fine of £2 13s 4d. The freedom fines paid suggest that the men were established traders with some recognised wealth.

<sup>1029</sup> TNA, E122/201/13.

occurrence of a large quantity of woad being brought into Exeter from the Azores by an English merchant.

The places of residence of traders importing goods into Exeter from overseas in the 1550s and 1560s, as recorded in the Town Customs using a sample of five years, are shown in Appendix 34. The majority were from Exeter, reaching a peak in 1561/2 when there were 63 out of 98 (64%). Further, by 1556/7 the principal merchants importing goods were from Exeter.<sup>1030</sup> Foremost were Maurice Levermore (mayor in 1555 and 1564) and William Hurst. The second major group of shippers were Exeter merchants, though they included Robert Vynton, who had connections with Exmouth.

A detailed analysis of the trading community in 1558/9 based on the particulars of customs accounts shows that the overall number of exporters had fallen further.<sup>1031</sup> There were just 59 exporters of whom 38 (64%), were Exeter-based, 11 were Devonian and 10 were aliens. This reduction reflects the growing dominance of the Exonians. Exeter men sent out the highest valued exports (80.9%). The import trade involved a larger group of 80 men. Nearly half of them were Exeter traders (38) and there were 27 other English and 15 alien men recorded. Most of the alien traders were French, from a range of ports, not just Morlaix. Alien merchants brought in little (2.3%). The extent of Exeter dominance in the trade was high by this point. It was less marked in the import trade as the city's traders accounted for approaching two thirds of the value of the trade (62.7%). Other English traders brought in almost twice the value in imports as opposed to exports (31.1% compared to 16.7%). At this date the alien Azores woad importers are not recorded as traders in the accounts.

William Hurst was responsible for nearly a fifth of the total value of the imported goods (18%) and also had the largest valued exports (12%). He was clearly at the height of his influence in the port at that time, just before the formation of the Merchants' Company. Non-Exeter traders were far less significant exporters. The greatest values were handled by Cullompton's Henry Parris and George Cokeram (3.5% and 3.4%). One change was that a larger group of Exeter men were exporting goods worth over £100 and over £200. This suggests the Exeter

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<sup>1030</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 57.

<sup>1031</sup> TNA, E122/45/12A; DHC, ECA, Book 57.

merchants' greater investment, dominance and wealth gained through their increased control of trade through the port.

The government issued a new Book of Rates in 1558 which led to a rise in the valuations for cloth and these have been incorporated into the valuations of goods from this year onwards.<sup>1032</sup> An unusual account survives for the port of Exeter for 1558/59 which lists the principal native merchants exporting cloth.

<sup>1033</sup> William Hurst invested far more than any other merchant. He exported nearly twice the number of cloths of the second ranking merchant, John Periam (mayor in 1563 and 1572). The rest of the leading cloth exporters were Exeter men, an indication of their growing influence.

Exeter's lay subsidy for 1557 confirms the importance of the traders within the city's economy.<sup>1034</sup> In that year 14 men were assessed to pay on goods worth £30 or more. Eleven of these are noted by the customer as traders. They were headed by William Hurst, assessed on £100 and John Peter, assessed on £80. They were becoming the two dominant merchants of the port and consolidated this in the 1560s.

Of other English traders only the Cullompton merchants, Henry Parris, George Cockram and Simon Kelway feature importantly both in making the higher valued exports in 1558/59 and in the cloth exports account for the same year.<sup>1035</sup> In the Town Customs the other notable group of traders importing goods were from Salcombe, mostly trading in fish.<sup>1036</sup>

By 1560/61 the ten principal merchants were all Exeter men.<sup>1037</sup> Also the largest number of traders were Exonians, reaching a peak in 1561/2, when 63 have been identified. Further, the particulars of customs for 1562/63 confirm the picture in terms of the calculated value of the goods when 71% of the value of the imports and 62% of the value of the exports were by Exeter traders.<sup>1038</sup>

William Hurst was the leading merchant though John Peter (mayor in 1557,

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<sup>1032</sup> Willan, *Tudor Book*. One undyed cloth exported has been valued at £6 rather than £2. For full explanation see Appendix 1.

<sup>1033</sup> TNA, E122/45/12B.

<sup>1034</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.55-59.

<sup>1035</sup> TNA, E122/45/12A; 45/12B.

<sup>1036</sup> See Appendix 34.

<sup>1037</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 57.

<sup>1038</sup> TNA, E122/46/11. See Appendix 33.

1562 and 1575) was an almost equally prominent importer. A new generation of merchants, some with substantial investments, especially in imported goods, was evident. They were headed by Philip Yard and Simon Knight and, in exports, by Thomas Martin, respectively Hurst's son-in-law, former apprentice and grandson. These were the city's future leaders.

The dominance of the Exeter men in the trade continued in the late 1560s. This is shown in Appendix 34 which identifies the designated town of origin of all the overseas traders, where it was noted by the customer, between 1565 and 1570. In 1567 William Hurst was the leading importer with 17 shipments followed by John Peter (14) and Simon Knight (12).<sup>1039</sup> If we take into account only the overseas trade recorded in the port books John Peter and Simon Knight eclipsed Hurst in terms of total shipments made.<sup>1040</sup> The books also suggest that Hurst had become less active in exporting goods overseas. His Martin grandsons were important in the trade by this time and his third grandson, William Martin, was a principal merchant then. The overseas port book confirms the dominance of Exeter men in the import and export business in 1567/68 accounting for more than nine times the next most important place of residence for importers and six times more for exporters.<sup>1041</sup>

Traders from other towns played a much less significant role by the 1560s. The particulars of customs for 1562/63 confirm the picture in the calculated value of the goods they imported (27%) and exported (34%).<sup>1042</sup> Only Exmouth's Lawrence Bowerman and Cullompton's George Cockeram were principal merchants. By 1567 the principal merchants included only John Waldron of Tiverton from outside Exeter.<sup>1043</sup> Other groups of traders were associated with Tiverton, Kenton, Topsham, Taunton and Cullompton. A few London men were also participating.<sup>1044</sup> The port books further identify that a significant number of aliens were engaged in the overseas trade, 18 as importers and 17 as exporters

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<sup>1039</sup> DHC, ECA. Book 57.

<sup>1040</sup> TNA, E190/926/1.

<sup>1041</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1042</sup> TNA, E122/46/11. See Appendix 33.

<sup>1043</sup> For his trading in 1567 see TNA E190/926/1. Maunder traces John Waldron's trading between 1562 and 1569 (*Tiverton Cloth*, pp.39, 40, 41). He traded in cloth through the port of Exeter but was also the biggest exporter of cloth to Spain through Barnstaple. By 1569 he was trading with the French ports. John Waldron has also been identified as a trader through Exeter in the Town Customs accounts and as more than a clothier by Sampson, *History*, p.71.

<sup>1044</sup> See Appendix 34.



but again apparently with small values of trade, only 2% of imports and 4% of exports. They were nearly all connected with a range of French ports headed by Conquet and St Malo.<sup>1045</sup>

At the end of the period studied, in 1569/70, John Peter had emerged as Exeter's dominant merchant in the number of shipments made into and out of the port.<sup>1046</sup> Most of the other principal traders were Exeter men. William Hurst had died in 1568.<sup>1047</sup> Two of his grandsons, Thomas and Nicholas Martin, were now making the next largest number of shipments along with William Chapell (mayor in 1569 and 1579). The Cullompton men, Humphrey Parris and George Cockeram, continued to play a role, alongside the Tivertonian John Waldron, amongst the leading ranks of merchants.<sup>1048</sup> The principal merchants controlling the trade by 1570 were overwhelmingly Exeter merchants but they had not managed to exclude some key traders from other towns.

### **5.3 Factors Affecting the Growing Dominance of Exeter's Trade by its own Merchants**

The Exeter merchants, firstly by the later 1520s and more decisively, from the 1540s, took over more control of the trade in the port of Exeter. Their share rose notably from a quarter in the 1490s to over half in the 1540s to nearer three quarters by the 1560s. The increase was slightly less in the export trade.<sup>1049</sup> The value of the goods traded by the wealthiest Exeter traders (as identified in the tax assessments of 1489, 1523, 1544 and 1557) was compared with that of the other Exeter traders. For the first time in 1542/43 all of the leading merchants in terms of shipments were Exeter men.<sup>1050</sup> The home port traders were able to assert even greater control by the 1550s and 1560s. The reasons for this change are now explored.

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<sup>1045</sup> See Appendix 33; TNA, E190/926/1.

<sup>1046</sup> TNA, E190/927/3, 927/7, 927/11.

<sup>1047</sup> DHC, Exeter St Petrock, PR 1.

<sup>1048</sup> Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp. 40, 41. Maunder also stresses the active role of John West and John Land in the port of Exeter by 1565. Three other Tiverton merchants are also noted in 1567. Many of these men were closely linked through their marriages.

<sup>1049</sup> See Appendix 33. This can be contrasted with a more gradual decline in that handled by other English merchants. There was a much more violent fluctuation in the value of the trade shipped by aliens, which reached over a third of the import value in the 1490s and 1540s but was much lower in the 1520s and 1560s.

<sup>1050</sup> See Appendix 1.

The role of individual Exeter merchants was decisive in this development. The influence of William Hurst on the city was long and widespread throughout his five mayoralties, spanning from 1524 to 1561 and lasting until his death in 1568. William Hurst appeared as one of the principal merchants through the port in every year for which this has been calculated from 1520 to 1568. He was, therefore, at the forefront of trading activities at the port for nearly fifty years and so his influence was immense. Hoskins noted his longevity.<sup>1051</sup> No other merchant rivalled his number of years as a principal merchant, though there were others for more than 20 years such as Gilbert Kirk, Maurice Levermore, John Midwinter and John Blackaller. These were the men who took firmer control of the port's trade for its home port merchants.

Further, Exeter-based families dominated the port of Exeter's trade in the Elizabethan period. As Hoskins observed there was 'a solid core of second-generation mercantile families'.<sup>1052</sup> This family domination was not evident at all in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. By the mid-sixteenth century prominent families were helping the Exeter merchants to establish an ascendancy. A few were principal merchants in two generations, indicating the extent of their influence, such as the Hursts and the Martins.<sup>1053</sup> There were also prominent sets of brothers who were principal merchants such as John and Robert Midwinter and John and Richard Strobridge.<sup>1054</sup> Family domination was really a factor in establishing the control of the port by the later Elizabethan years.

Another factor which helped the Exeter men to act together in controlling the trade was the formation of the Merchants' Company, which really began to have an effective influence from 1560, as the old guard of merchants who headed it for its first few years, backed by large numbers of their former apprentices who

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<sup>1051</sup> Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants', pp.168-170.

<sup>1052</sup> Ibid., p.168. Hoskins cites the Periams, Midwinters, Blackalls (or Blackallers), Martins and Spicers.

<sup>1053</sup> See Appendix 1. John Hurst, the son of William Hurst, was a member of this elite group in 1542/43, 1549/50 and 1550/51 as was his son-in-law Richard Martin in 1520/21 and his sons Thomas and Nicholas Martin in 1567/68.

<sup>1054</sup> See Appendix 1. John Midwinter was a principal merchant three times between 1542 and 1559 and Robert four times between 1557 and 1570. Richard Strobridge was a principal merchant twice between 1549 and 1551 and John Strobridge junior was one in 1550/51. John Strobridge senior was also a principal merchant in 1508/09 and 1523/24 but then the family were probably based in Colyton.

were emerging in the trade, maintained and extended their power. The Company was well structured and organised and helped the merchants to extend their influence.<sup>1055</sup>

Exeter merchants were also able to assert their supremacy over traders from other occupations, especially the tailors. A number of artisans were principal merchants in the port of Exeter in the years from the 1470s to the 1490s. They were therefore at the forefront of Exeter's trading in the late fifteenth century. The most notable were the tailors John Ector between 1483 and 1500 and Thomas Andrew between 1489 and 1500, who in these years must have had a sustained influence in the port. There were five other tailors who were in this elite group between 1470 and 1503 but none were after this date.<sup>1056</sup> Others who were principal merchants in these years have been identified as mercers, drapers, smiths, waxchandlers and grocers but none after 1516.<sup>1057</sup> The Exeter merchants were able to gain dominance because later in the sixteenth century men from other occupations were far less involved in overseas trade.

Beyond the city, the reasons for the Exeter merchants being able to exert more control were also bound up with the fortunes of other towns. In the last three decades of the fifteenth century three or four Topsham merchants were principal merchants in the port in any one year. The most significant of these was Thomas Mongey, whose trading through the port of Exeter reached its zenith in 1499/1500. After 1516, with one exception in 1562, no Topsham men can be classified as principal merchants.

Taunton men were also supplanted. There was a sizeable group of them who played a decisive role in the years from the 1470s to the 1500s and comprised over half of the principal merchants in 1494 and 1502. Two or three Taunton men were still some of the port's leading merchants through to the 1530s but there are only a few isolated ones after this date. This links with the suggestions made about the economic fortunes of the Somerset town elsewhere in this

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<sup>1055</sup> See 6.2 for the emergence of the Merchants' Company.

<sup>1056</sup> Richard Geffray, John Fenecote, Thomas Crues, John Wylkynson and John Scrivener were tailors.

<sup>1057</sup> John Taylor as a draper, Robert Smyth, Thomas Bond and John Colshill as mercers, Richard Hewet as a grocer, Walter Kever as a smith and John Gomby as a waxchandler.

study and the lessening of their influence also removed a further group of rivals to the Exeter traders.<sup>1058</sup>

Tiverton merchants as a group were never influential in the port of Exeter but individual merchants reached some importance, especially in the 1520s.<sup>1059</sup>

Maunder has argued that the Tiverton merchants began looking towards London for their trading opportunities, notably from the 1530s.<sup>1060</sup> The timing of the change in the trading of the Tivertonians added to the Exeter merchants' ability to control their home port.<sup>1061</sup> However, by the late 1560s John Waldron was a principal merchant trading through Exeter. A few Cullompton merchants were leading traders in the 1520s and in the years from 1542 to 1570.<sup>1062</sup>

Dartmouth men rarely played much of a role as traders through the port of Exeter, except briefly in the early 1550s, so were not challenging those from Exeter. Exeter men were trading much more through Dartmouth until the 1560s while Freeman sees the whole period before the 1570s as one of economic downturn for the South Devon port.<sup>1063</sup>

There is no indication in the overseas trade that merchants from any of England's larger ports tried to exert any influence. The most significant group of traders through Exeter were the Londoners in the 1470s but the influence of the capital was not to emerge strongly again until their incursions into Exeter's coastal trade in the 1560s. A greater threat to the leadership of the Exeter men was posed by alien merchants who brought in valuable cargoes, notably woad from the Azores.<sup>1064</sup> After 1550 aliens ceased to be principal merchants as smaller-scale traders from France became the main participants. Exonians were, therefore, successfully able to assert their dominance over the traders from other ports.

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<sup>1058</sup> See 5.2. The most detailed comments concerning the economic fluctuations of Taunton are provided in R.G.H. Whitty, 'The History of Taunton under the Tudors and Stuarts', University of London Ph.D., 1938, pp.16-23, 221-268, 331-338.

<sup>1059</sup> See Appendix 1. In 1523/24 Richard Parkhouse was the leading importer and exporter through Exeter.

<sup>1060</sup> Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.24-41.

<sup>1061</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>1062</sup> See Appendix 1. These were, most notably, John Lane in the 1520s but even more so the much less known George Cockeram, who was one of the leading merchants trading through Exeter from 1542 up to 1570. For John Lane see also Carus Wilson, 'Significance'.

<sup>1063</sup> See 5.5 and R. Freeman, *Dartmouth and its Neighbours*, Chichester, 1990, pp.55-56, 76-77.

<sup>1064</sup> This was highest in 1482 when three quarters of the leading importers and two thirds of the leading exporters were Breton. In the early 1520s and throughout the 1540s groups of three or four alien merchants, then Spanish, were also amongst the highest importers. See Appendix 33.

The ascendancy of the Exeter merchants in the trade was not, however, matched by a large increase in the number of shipments per year recorded in the customs accounts. In 1489 /90 John Symon made 16 import shipments and this peak was not overtaken until the early 1560s when William Hurst was recorded making 19 import shipments in 1560/61 and 20 in 1561/62.<sup>1065</sup>

Similarly, the value of their commerce was not the cause of their increasing dominance of their home port. Although there was a significant increase in the estimated value of the goods traded by the leading Exeter merchants from the 1490s compared to the two previous decades, this did not begin to rise again until the 1530s. In 1531/32 the estimated value of Gilbert Kirk's combined imports and exports reached the substantial £1,257. This was only exceeded by William Hurst's combined estimated value of £1,352 in 1558/59.<sup>1066</sup> Even allowing for the introduction of the new Book of Rates in 1558 it is not possible to identify further increases.

To establish if the wealthiest merchants were responsible for the rising dominance of the Exeter men, or if it can be attributed to the wider group of Exeter traders, the value of the goods traded by the wealthiest Exeter traders (as identified in the tax assessments of 1489, 1523, 1544 and 1557) was compared with that of the other Exeter traders (See Appendix 33). The proportion of the value of the goods handled by the lesser merchants increased in the 1490s and was especially significant in 1562/3 when in imports it reached 48% and in exports 41%. This suggests that the lesser merchants were important in establishing Exeter's dominance, possibly as they had by that time become more united in the Merchants' Company. This can be compared with MacCaffrey's findings for the early seventeenth century when he concluded that the larger merchants, paying over £100 per year in customs duties, controlled nearly half of the business but there were still a sizeable number of smaller traders.<sup>1067</sup>

The Exeter merchants were also participating more noticeably in the coastal trade by the 1560s. Further they were less evident trading in other ports, especially Dartmouth, where their trading activity outside their home port was by

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<sup>1065</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 5/6 Henry VII, 2/3, 3/4 Eliz. I.

<sup>1066</sup> TNA, E122/201/7, 201/8, 45/12A.

<sup>1067</sup> See Appendix 33 and MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.170-171.

far the greatest. This was also all probably part of the concentration on taking over more control of the port of Exeter.

The role of individual merchants, headed by William Hurst, was of great significance in establishing the control of the Exeter men over their home port. However, the rise of the Exeter merchants was primarily caused by the falling away of their rivals, first from other English towns and then the alien traders, allowing the Exeter merchants to control the trade with the aid of their new Company. Overall the value of the trade, especially allowing for inflation in prices from the 1530s, did not actually rise substantially, at least between 1500 and 1570. Different shares went to different traders over time. This may explain why other traders gradually competed less for trade through the port of Exeter, especially those who shifted focus to the more dynamic trade through London such as the Tiverton merchants. This may help to explain why, with a few exceptions, Exeter merchants did not become 'mere merchants' but retained their retail function as they were operating a relatively limited trade and it made more sense to integrate overseas, coastal and retail trade in their businesses, not to concentrate their attention on one of them. This suggests why, within Exeter itself, the merchants gained control at the expense of the tailors and other artisans in a gradual manner which is reflected in the less assured character of the Merchants' Company at the time.

#### **5.4 The Role of the Exeter Merchants in the Coastal Trade**

##### *Introduction*

This section explores the role of Exeter merchants in the coastal trade of the port of Exeter from 1470 to 1570. It also examines this in relation to traders from other places. In the last decades of the fifteenth century and the first ones of the sixteenth the leading Exeter traders were playing a significant role in the coastal trade but they were not dominant. Men from other Devon towns and from further afield were also important. The role of Exeter traders lessened in the first half of the sixteenth century but re-emerged by the 1560s, in line with their growing economic control of the city. The reasons for this are discussed below and include the response of the Exeter merchants to the mid-sixteenth century economic uncertainties and to the increasing threat of the expanding role of London merchants in the country's out-ports. In addition, other factors were the

increasing business expansion of some of the leading Exeter merchants into the coastal trade and the new unity of the merchants after the formation of their company by 1558.

The coastal trade is documented in the parallel Particulars of Customs and Town Customs, the other Town Customs, the Certificate Books and the Port Books. The pattern of the trade has been discussed earlier in this study.<sup>1068</sup> The Town Customs accounts give us the best indicator of the volume of shipping entering the port and these suggest high points in the coastal trade in the mid-1470s, from the 1480s through to the end of the second decade of the sixteenth century and finally in the early 1560s.<sup>1069</sup>

#### *Coastal Traders in the Years from the 1470s to the 1500s*

In the early 1470s only a few merchants are recorded in each account making multiple coastal shipments into the port of Exeter. These were determined by comparing the parallel town and national customs accounts. No individual merchants dominated the coastal trade though some key merchants were participating. The most prolific was Richard Geffray, mayor in 1471 and a tailor. Five other Exeter men were also recorded bringing in more than one shipment, led by Robert Symon (receiver in 1483) as well as traders from Southampton and Topsham.<sup>1070</sup>

By 1492-1494 the existence of fuller parallel records does help us to establish that more leading merchants were taking part in the coastal trade such as Richard Undey of Exeter (mayor in 1498) and John Symon (mayor in 1512 and 1523). Other prominent traders from Dartmouth, London, Topsham, Tiverton and Budleigh can also be identified.<sup>1071</sup> By 1502/3 the situation had changed very little. Principal Exeter merchants such as Thomas Andrew (mayor in 1504 and

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<sup>1068</sup> See 2.3.

<sup>1069</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 10/11 Edward IV- 9/10 Eliz. I. See Appendix 10. Total figures for the volume of shipping entering the port coastally and overseas were used here but this gives a good indication of fluctuations. The peak number was 155 shipments in 1560/61 but other years approached this figure much earlier such as 1476/77 when there were 153. See 2.3.

<sup>1070</sup> TNA, E122/41/3, 41/4; DHC, ECA, TC 10/11 Edward IV. Lower numbers of multiple shipments are recorded for Walter James of Southampton and Thomas Coyle of Topsham, who had an established business in trading tilestones coastally. The other Exeter men bringing in more than one shipment were John Taylor (draper), John Ector, Thomas Bond and Richard Undy.

<sup>1071</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 9/10 Henry VII; TNA, E122/41/18.

1510) and Robert Sherman (alias Brown, receiver in 1511) were recorded as bringing in the largest number of cargoes, mainly re-shipped imported goods.

<sup>1072</sup>

### *Coastal Traders in the 1520s and 1540s*

There is not much information on Exeter's coastal trade between the end of the first series of town customs in 1508 and the parallel town and national customs covering the years from 1542 to 1545. An isolated town customs roll, which survives for 1526/7, records coastal trade and it is possible, to an extent, to identify it separately from the overseas imports which the document also records.<sup>1073</sup> A group of Exeter men were involved in the coastal trade which included the leading merchants of the day and some small-scale traders. None of them brought in multiple shipments by coast. The next largest group were Dartmouth men. The coastal trade was fairly widely distributed and not dominated by Exeter men, though the number of identified places where traders resided had fallen from the start of the century.

A comparison of the surviving parallel town and the national customs accounts for the early 1540s suggests that the trade was less dominated by the major merchants then. Only Thomas Prestwood (mayor in 1544 and 1550) is recorded making multiple shipments, in 1543/44.<sup>1074</sup> Principal Exeter merchants and civic officials, such as William Hurst and his son John and others took part in the coastal trade bringing in goods on Plymouth, Lyme, Kingswear and Salcombe ships.<sup>1075</sup> In all these cases the goods brought in were perhaps imported from overseas and shipped along the coast. Other traders, particularly from Dartmouth and Kenton, were noted by the customer.

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<sup>1072</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 18/19 Henry VII; TNA, E122/41/25.

<sup>1073</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 18/19 Henry VIII.

<sup>1074</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 34/35, 35/36 Henry VIII; TNA, E122/43/14, 43/15. He brought in goods which seem to have originated in Spain on the 'John' of Kingswear in March 1544, manufactured goods on the 'Paule' of Dartmouth in April and madder on the 'John' of Kingswear in July, suggesting that he brought goods to Exeter from those ports.

<sup>1075</sup> Such as John Way, John Maynard, John Peter and Gilbert Kirk. William Hurst was mayor of Exeter five times in 1524, 1535, 1545, 1551 and 1561. His son John reached the receivership in 1550, John Way was receiver in 1542, John Maynard was receiver in 1545, John Peter served as mayor in 1557, 1562 and 1575, Gilbert Kirk was mayor in 1531 and 1539.



## *Coastal Traders in the 1550s*

By the later 1550s the parallel accounts suggest that the pattern of the distribution of the coastal trade remained unchanged, as shown in Appendix 36. The Town Customs do not record an increase in coastal shipments by the principal Exeter merchants. The Exonians Eustace Oliver, Michael Jerman, Peter Lake and John Dyer brought in goods and these included local trade in commodities such as honey and tilestones as well as wine, salt and glass. Only Thomas Richardson (mayor in 1566) is recorded bringing in multiple shipments. They sent out imported goods such as iron, wine, fruit, soap, linen cloth and canvas.<sup>1076</sup> The mid-century certificate books confirm that the Exeter merchants were involved in the coastal trade.<sup>1077</sup> A group of Dartmouth merchants trading coastally were mostly identified by the customer, or can be seen to be from that port from other sources. Two merchants from Plymouth were trading, including John Ilcombe, who held property in the city of Exeter. The most trading, however, was done by Robert Philippes bringing in five shipments of tilestones on the 'Humber' of Stokenham.<sup>1078</sup> He may have specialised in this traffic. This clearly shows that local coastal traders were continuing to work alongside the greater merchants and were conducting their businesses successfully.<sup>1079</sup> The main commodity leaving Exeter for many ports was a wide range of types of fish and Exeter men were not involved in this trade which remained the preserve of men from the Devon creeks and fishing villages.<sup>1080</sup>

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<sup>1076</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 4/5 Philip and Mary; TNA, E122/45/11 B. Eustace Oliver was receiver in 1556, Michael Jerman had entered the Exeter freedom in 1548 and a man of the same name served as mayor in 1582 and 1591, Peter Lake became a city bailiff in 1550, John Dyer did become city receiver in 1559.

<sup>1077</sup> TNA, E122/44/9, 45/1, 45/2, 45/5, 45/9.

<sup>1078</sup> There was a Robert Philpe in Stokenham in 1544 but by 1569 only Richard and John Phillip are listed in the taxation returns. Stoate, *Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls* p. 142; Stoate and Howard, *Devon Muster Roll*, p.199.

<sup>1079</sup> Stokenham is mentioned in the Town Customs accounts in 1470. Fox, *Evolution*, pp.88-89, 92-93, 122-129 contains an account of the development of Stokenham where many of the inhabitants owned boats and there was evidence of fish sales and maritime occupations. Earlier Town Customs accounts record local men bringing in cargoes of commodities such as tilestones and there was some specialisation in this trade such as Thomas Coyle of Topsham.

<sup>1080</sup> TNA, E122 44/9, 45/1, 45/2, 45/5, 45/9. Kowaleski has traced the growth of the South Western fisheries primarily up to the end of the fifteenth century and the certificate books provide more evidence of this from the middle of the sixteenth century: M. Kowaleski, 'The Expansion of the South-Western Fisheries in Late Medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 53: 3, 2000, pp. 429-454 discusses the expansion of the fish trade at Exeter by the 1460s and the 1490s both as aspects of the coastal and the international trade. Mercantile involvement is discussed on pp.445-446.

### *Coastal Traders in the 1560s*

A discernible change was taking place in the 1560s as the greater Exeter merchants were involving themselves more fully in the coastal trade. They were recorded in the three early Elizabethan certificate books both bringing in and shipping out goods coastwise.<sup>1081</sup> The Town Customs accounts for the late 1550s and 1560s also identify far more Exeter men than traders from any other place and the parallel local and national customs accounts for 1567/68 suggest a similar picture of change in the coastal trade.<sup>1082</sup> The evidence from the coastal port book for 1569/70 is presented in Appendix 32. It confirms the dominance of the Exeter men in this branch of the trade.<sup>1083</sup> They were headed by George Perryman (mayor in 1577) and Nicholas Martin (mayor in 1574 and 1585). Some Exeter merchants may have specialised in coastal trading. Thomas Smyth, clearly noted as an Exeter man in the accounts, consistently transported seck wine, on one occasion supplemented by 'great raisins' from Dartmouth. Overall the wealthy Exeter men were just as willing to play a role in the coastal trade and really wanted to dominate all aspects of the commerce.

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<sup>1081</sup> TNA, E122/46/1, 46/9, 46/13. George Bruton, John Peter, John Huchins, Hubert Colwyll, George Peryman, Peter Lake, Richard Strobridge, William Hurst, Anthony Thomas, William Chapell and Richard Newman were the Exeter merchants recorded in the certificate books.

<sup>1082</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 3/4, 4/5, 5/6 Philip and Mary; 5/6 Philip and Mary-1 Eliz. I, 1/2, 2/3, 3/4, 4/5, 5/6, 6/7, 9/10 Eliz. I; TNA, E190/926/1.

<sup>1083</sup> TNA, E190/927/3, 927/11.

# **MAP 5.1 DESIGNATED PLACES OF RESIDENCE OF COASTAL TRADERS 1565-1570: PORT OF EXETER – FROM THE COASTAL PORT BOOKS**

## **Designated Places of Residence of Coastal Traders 1565-1570: Port of Exeter - From the Coastal Port Books**



**(Sources: TNA E190 925/14, 926/9, 927/3, 927/11)**

Appendix 34 shows the known native towns of merchants involved in the trade between 1565 and 1570 as recorded in the coastal port books.<sup>1084</sup> Thirty-six Exeter men are designated. Most of them were prominent citizens and well over half of them had, or were, to take on civic office.<sup>1085</sup> Furthermore over three-quarters of them were members of the Exeter Merchants' Company. Most of those identified had established businesses and were members of the freedom of the city for an average length of 13 years. However, not all of the Exonian

<sup>1084</sup> TNA, E190/925/7, 14, 926/9, 927/3, 927/7, 927/11.

<sup>1085</sup> They included 11 mayors, 2 receivers and 7 bailiffs.

coastal traders were freemen.<sup>1086</sup> Most can be recognised as merchants though a few Exeter artisans took part in the coastal trade in the 1560s.<sup>1087</sup>

The richer merchants were maintaining an increasingly close involvement in the coastal trade, as can be seen from Appendix 32. The city's most prominent merchant, William Hurst, did so right up until near his death in 1568. He may have specialised to a degree within the trade. Between 1565 and 1567 all of Hurst's trading was carried out with the Cornish ports of Helston, Helford and Fowey, supplying foreign imports and goods from London in return for tin. Also much of John Peter's trade (mayor in 1557, 1562 and 1575) was also with the Cornish ports, though he did also trade with Dartmouth, Chichester and London. John Periam's trade (mayor in 1563 and 1572) consisted largely of shipments to Southampton, mostly of Cornish tin, perhaps for transport to London. It may be that the larger merchants were mainly interested in the coastal trade as a means of getting hold of tin and that the imports sent to Cornwall were essentially sent to service the purchase of tin.

The evidence of the coastal Port Books shows, in Appendix 30, that the largest group of other traders between 1565 and 1570 came from South and East Devon and not from the North, where coastal trade was carried out through Barnstaple.<sup>1088</sup> There was a significant group from Cornwall and Dorset (see Appendix 36). Poole men were particularly prominent in the trade and nine men from there can be identified. Poole was burgeoning economically.<sup>1089</sup> Other men traded through Exeter from as far apart as Llanelli and Hull. Not all of them were merchants as there were brewers, husbandmen, smiths and saddlers designated in the customs accounts and some artisans from other ports are

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<sup>1086</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, pp. 92, 94; DHC, ECA 58/7/11 f.29a. Richard Jurdayn did not enter the freedom until 1574 and Maurice Downe until 1578 and so they were trading in the coastal traffic before they took up the city's franchise. Maurice Downe was, however, a member of the Merchants' Company as early as 1568.

<sup>1087</sup> The most notable was the cook William Grenewode who brought in an unspecified cargo from Fowey in 1569. *Exeter Freeman*, p.81 shows that he entered the freedom in 1555 as a cook. He became warden of Exe Bridge in 1562 and so was of some social standing. No other man of that name has been traced in Exeter at that time.

<sup>1088</sup> D. Taylor, 'The Maritime Trade of the Bristol Channel Ports in the Sixteenth Century', University of Bristol Ph.D., 2009, pp.23-46 discusses the development of Barnstaple's trade at this time.

<sup>1089</sup> R. Tittler, 'The Vitality of an Elizabethan Port: The Economy of Poole c.1550-1600', *Southern History*, 7, 1985, pp. 95-113. Poole gained 'county' status in 1571 and so joined Bristol, Gloucester and Exeter: Barry, 'South West', p.86.

recorded.<sup>1090</sup> However, there was a growing group of Londoners. Seventeen were recorded shipping goods by the 1560s. Some had strong connections with Exeter and had lived there, such as John Bodleigh and William Rixman.<sup>1091</sup> There were London salters, grocers and merchant tailors. The Londoners were clearly taking far more interest in the coastal trade with Exeter by the mid-1560s, part of the expanding involvement nationally, of London merchants in the out-ports.

### *Conclusion*

In the last decades of the fifteenth century and the first ones of the sixteenth the leading Exeter traders were playing a significant role in the coastal trade. However, real change took place by the 1560s as the leading Exeter merchants expanded their involvement. Leading and powerful merchants like William Hurst and John Peter were developing some specialisation in the trade. This was a key factor in explaining the increased role of the Exeter men in the coastal traffic. The Exeter merchants were probably also widening their businesses as the mid-sixteenth century economic problems impacted on them. With the growing spread of the influence of London traders the Exeter merchants, more united after the formation of their own Company in 1558, were able to work together in safeguarding the interests of its members.

## **5.5 Exeter Merchants Trading Through Other Ports**

### *Sources and Historiography*

This section examines the extent to which the Exeter merchants carried out their trade in other ports in the period studied, to determine how wide their trading network was and if any changes took place in their activities during this time.

It is argued here that Dartmouth was by far the principal port through which Exeter merchants worked outside their home one. Changes in the number of

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<sup>1090</sup> Henry Reple was a Kenton brewer. Robert Erliche from Melcombe Regis brought in substantial quantities of ale and beer to the port of Exeter. Melcombe Regis was closely linked with Weymouth with joint use of the harbours being agreed in 1564 and a charter of union in 1571. J. Crump, *Medieval Weymouth: Growth and Decline*, Oxford, 2015, p.80.

<sup>1091</sup> See 5.1 for John Bodleigh. TNA, STAC 2/17/159 records a William Rixman of St Edmund, Exeter being involved in an assault on the goldsmith Peter Steche and his wife at a house in Exeter but he does not appear in the taxation records for the city.

Exeter men trading through this South Devon port are analysed and the reasons for these changes and the close relationship with Dartmouth are explored. Exeter merchants were less involved in trade through other ports, even in Devon, though the Dorset ports were becoming more important by the mid-sixteenth century. The role of Exeter merchants trading through the greater ports of Bristol, Southampton and London was less significant but changes in their role in these are discussed.

Kowaleski noted that in the late-fourteenth century Exeter merchants rarely appeared outside their own home port. She concluded that their names were conspicuously absent from the surviving late-fourteenth century customs accounts of Southampton, Dartmouth, Plymouth and Bristol suggesting that Exeter merchants kept a low profile in the export of goods overseas from elsewhere.<sup>1092</sup> However, Nicholls notes the activities of Exeter merchants in her thesis on Totnes and Dartmouth in the years from 1470 to 1530. She concluded that the coastal trade of these towns was largely in the hands of Exeter and Dartmouth merchants and that goods intended for distribution inland mostly came into Exeter, which was better situated for land routes.<sup>1093</sup>

The present study has been based upon the analysis of a sample of the particulars of customs accounts for Dartmouth, Plymouth, Lyme, Barnstaple and Bridgwater for the 1480s, 1520s, 1540s and 1560s. The Water Bailiffs accounts, which are the surviving local customs records for Dartmouth and Bridgwater, were also used.<sup>1094</sup> Published editions of customs accounts for Bristol, Southampton and London were explored to investigate the presence of Exeter traders in those ports.

### *Dartmouth*

Nicholls observed that in 1508/09 six Exonians sent goods from Dartmouth free of the town's custom, as they were from Exeter.<sup>1095</sup> She identified a 'flourishing coastal trade' between the two ports which was most fully evidenced through the Exeter local customs accounts as they survive much more fully than those for Dartmouth. Further, Youngs noted that in the early 1530s the extent of

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<sup>1092</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.234.

<sup>1093</sup> Nicholls, 'Trading Communities', pp. 104-105, 107-108.

<sup>1094</sup> See 1.11.

<sup>1095</sup> Henry Hamlyn, John Hewet, John Hopkyn, John More, John Orange and John Symon.

Dartmouth's trade was being inflated by the use made of its port facilities by Exeter merchants and suggested that this practice did not stop with the cutting of the Exeter Canal, completed by 1566.<sup>1096</sup> Dartmouth was the prime trading centre for Exeter merchants outside their home port.

In the boom years of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century Exeter merchants are recorded less frequently by the customer trading through Dartmouth. The detailed accounts which survive for 1498/99 record only three ventures out of the port and three into it carrying the goods of known Exeter traders.<sup>1097</sup>

The pattern was not substantially different in 1502/3 as five ships are recorded carrying the goods of Exeter men from Dartmouth and two ships carrying them in.<sup>1098</sup> Trade was largely conducted by the same Exeter traders as a few years earlier as well as by other prominent Exeter merchants, alongside shipments by men from Lyme, Totnes, Berry Pomeroy, Taunton and four identified aliens. Robert Sherman also sent cloth and tin out of Dartmouth in April 1503 alongside men from Dartmouth and Salisbury and some alien traders. In the following month Exeter's William Crugge sent out cloth on the 'Jorge Grenway' whose shippers were headed by 'John Grenway cive London' (also of Tiverton). Here Tiverton's premier merchant, the probable owner of the ship, was working with one of Exeter's most successful citizens in trading through Dartmouth. There were no other Exeter men shipping goods on this venture.

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<sup>1096</sup> Youngs, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', p.10; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.131. (MacCaffrey notes that the canal was not used with any regularity for another 10 years.) Henderson observed that it was mostly used for bulky commodities then and that most goods still passed through Topsham Quay and then by road to Exeter: 'Development', pp. 124-129.

<sup>1097</sup> TNA, E122/201/2. The most significant of these was the entry of the 'Leonard' of Teignmouth in October 1498 carrying raisins, figs, sugar, wax and oil valued at £135 8s 4d shipped in partnership by Thomas Andrew, William Frost, Richard Hewet, John Boteler and John William. The first four were prominent Exeter men and William had completed an apprenticeship with Andrew a few years previously. The only other goods brought into Dartmouth in that year by identified Exonians were the canvas and crest cloth by John Hamlyn and the iron brought in by John Boteler, in June 1499, both as part of cargoes which carried the goods of known Dartmouth men. The same was true of the three cargoes sent out of Dartmouth which all comprised cargoes of cloth sent out by the same Exeter men as well as the leading merchants John and Robert Symon.

<sup>1098</sup> TNA, E122/41/2. The noticeable difference from the earlier year is the activity of Exeter's Robert Sherman (also alias Brown) who in June brought in two cargoes which included manufactured goods, probably from the Low Countries as they included Holland cloth. His fellow Exonian John Hewet brought in an even wider variety of goods on the 'Mary Bryxham' of Dartmouth in June 1503.

There is less evidence that Exeter men were trading through Dartmouth in the 1520s. In early 1522 John Blackaller brought in crest cloth and congers and sent out white straits but he is the only Exeter merchant who can be identified with any certainty trading through Dartmouth in this year.<sup>1099</sup> There was a change by the late 1530s when there were a much larger number of Exeter traders using the Dartmouth port- facilities.<sup>1100</sup> In 1537/38 21 identifiable Exeter traders were recorded doing so. Much of this was limited to one or two ventures though six Exeter men can be seen as being involved in multiple shipments such as William Hurst (15 shipments,) John Blackaller (14) Thomas Prestwood and Roger Blackall (8) Gilbert Kirk (6) and John Maynard (5). In this account the value of the trade was recorded or, in a few instances, can be calculated. The most prolific trader, William Hurst sent out cargoes primarily of cloth and tin, with some tanned calfskins valued at £173. He brought in some cargoes of crest cloth or fruit, but mainly cargoes of manufactured goods which, from their nature, were more likely derived from Northern France than the Low Countries, valued at £52. Even a more junior Exeter merchant such as Roger Blackall sent out mainly cloth but also some lead worth £76 and brought in cargoes mainly of crest cloth and some canvas worth £44.<sup>1101</sup> Exeter men brought in goods largely as shippers with men from other towns, often Dartmouth men. There were few really high investments in one cargo though John Periam did send out a cargo of tin valued at £60 in July 1538. Gilbert Kirk also headed the list of merchants shipping crest cloth, canvas and olerons into Dartmouth in August 1538 on the 'Peter' of Roscoff.<sup>1102</sup> His fellow investors included four prominent Taunton traders. The shipping used to transport the goods had Dartmouth most

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<sup>1099</sup> TNA, E122/42/6; 201/11; DHC, ECA, Exeter St Mary Arches PR1; Stoate, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*, p.195. Howard, *Devon Muster Roll*; <http://www.historyofparliamenttrustonline.org/>. It is likely that he had family connections with Dartmouth as in the same year James and Christopher Blackaller were also trading. Blackallers were resident mainly in Totnes (where James was assessed on £80 worth of goods in 1524) and also in Dartmouth. A John Blackaller served as mayor of Totnes. John Blackaller, of Exeter, was buried in St Mary Arches in 1563. He served as mayor of Exeter in 1530, 1536 and 1548 and as a city MP from 1529 to 1534. There is sometimes confusion with John Blackall, who was probably a kinsman. Both were trading at the same time through the port of Exeter and were distinguished by the customers, such as in April 1542 when John Blackaller imported crest cloth on the 'Michael Fowler' and John Blackall imported a larger quantity of crest cloth with some canvas on the same voyage. John Blackall was mayor of Exeter in 1560.

<sup>1100</sup> TNA, E122/43/11.

<sup>1101</sup> Roger Blackall of Exeter entered the freedom in 1526, took on the Exeter bailiffship in 1533, had become a member of the city council in 1535 but probably died in 1538.

<sup>1102</sup> Oleron was sailcloth made from coarse canvas from the area of the Ile d'Oleron off the West coast of France: Vanes, *Ledger*, p.330.



frequently named as a home port and if we add vessels which bore the name of the Holland family from Dartmouth to this the preponderance of Dartmouth ships was even greater. Ships from Totnes and Topsham were also used frequently. Exeter men were seizing the trading opportunities through Dartmouth at this time.

Dartmouth inhabitants were less prosperous in the 1540s than in the 1520s. In the 1544 subsidy 11 men were assessed within the town on goods worth more than £20 as opposed to 15 in the 1524 one. Also in 1544 £25 was the highest individual assessment whereas in 1524 there were four men assessed on goods valued between £133 6s 8d and £66 13s 4d.<sup>1103</sup> In Exeter the number of payers assessed at over £20 increased between 1524 and 1544 and the highest assessment was £300 and £266 13s 4d (400 marks).<sup>1104</sup> Freeman saw the major period of Dartmouth's development as occurring after 1580.<sup>1105</sup>

Dartmouth trade continued to be important to the Exeter merchants in the 1540s with the port with Dartmouth provided plentiful shipping.<sup>1106</sup> Exeter traders were able to work alongside Dartmouth merchants more readily than any others in the region, in what were probably the most profitable business arrangements for them. There is full evidence of this recorded by the Dartmouth customer in 1545/46.<sup>1107</sup> In this year 22 Exeter merchants can be identified in the accounts. The largest number of shipments was by William Hurst, for whom four consignments brought in and four sent out were recorded. Some of these were of high value, such as in December 1545 when he sent out from Dartmouth one cargo of tin valued at £85 with cloth valued at £74 as the sole trader on 'Le Salvator'. In sending goods out of Dartmouth Hurst was part of a partnership of five men headed by Christopher Savery of Dartmouth and including his fellow Exonian, John Blackaller, who brought in a very large cargo of canvas valued at £173 in late November 1545. In May 1546 Hurst and his son John brought in a varied cargo on the 'Jesus' of Mydelborowgh (Middelburg). His shipments included 'newbrode cards flanders', which further identifies the port of origin of

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<sup>1103</sup> Stoaite, *Devon Subsidy Rolls*; Stoaite, *Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls*; Nicholls, 'Trading Communities', p.14.

<sup>1104</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp. 35-54.

<sup>1105</sup> R. Freeman, *Dartmouth: A New History of the Port and its People*, Dartmouth, 1983, pp.56-61.

<sup>1106</sup> Nicholls, 'Trading Communities', p.105.

<sup>1107</sup> TNA, E122/43/7.

the vessel. Hurst was bringing in manufactured goods from the Low Countries as was his specialism within Exeter's trade, and so his Dartmouth trading concerns were an extension of his Exeter ones. Hurst took advantage of the opportunities provided by Dartmouth for more direct trade with the Channel Islands.<sup>1108</sup> This had been expanding from the 1460s to 1480s but had lessened by the earlier part of the sixteenth century.<sup>1109</sup> Overall William Hurst was making a significant investment in his trading through the port of Dartmouth. In 1545/46 the value of his recorded trade there can be calculated as importing goods valued at £117 and exporting goods valued at £303. This can be compared with the calculated value of Hurst's recorded trade through the port of Exeter, as shown in Appendix 1, in the years 1537/38, 1542/43 and 1549/50.<sup>1110</sup> In two of the three years his imports through Exeter were of a higher value but in only one of the three years were his exports higher through Exeter, so for William Hurst trading through Dartmouth was a very significant part of his business. Dartmouth was clearly the centre of some important connections which involved more than just the use of Dartmouth shipping, so going beyond what Youings suggested.<sup>1111</sup>

Other leading Exeter merchants such as Thomas Prestwood and John Bodley also made substantial shipments through the port of Dartmouth in 1545-6.<sup>1112</sup> Some were part of joint ventures, suggesting the high value of the trade.<sup>1113</sup> There is evidence that Exeter men used the port of Dartmouth as a place of connection with the Channel Islands' trade rather more than they did directly through Exeter, as Exeter men clearly brought in goods on Jersey ships and also Guernsey cloth on ships from other ports. Many of the traders were

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<sup>1108</sup> In September 1546 he brought in canvas valued at £18 alongside seven other merchants, six of whom were certainly Exonians on the 'James' of Jersey and also £12 worth of crest cloth on the 'Florye' of Jersey two days later.

<sup>1109</sup> W.R. Childs, 'Channel Islands Shipping as Recorded in the English Customs Accounts 1300-1500' in A.G. Jamieson, ed., *A People of the Sea: The Maritime History of the Channel Islands*, 1986, pp. 44-58; R. McLoughlin, *The Sea was their Fortune: A Maritime History of the Channel Islands*, Bradford on Avon, 1997, pp.44-47.

<sup>1110</sup> In 1537/8 his recorded imports were calculated at £599 and exports £381, imports in 1542/42 £87 and exports £134, and in 1549/50 imports £352 and exports £295.

<sup>1111</sup> Youings, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', pp.101-103.

<sup>1112</sup> Thomas Prestwood sent out tin in December 1545 recorded as worth £50 and cloth which can be calculated as worth a further £40. John Bodley sent out tin worth £52 and twine worth £12 10s as the other shipper on the voyage.

<sup>1113</sup> Such as by John Maynard who brought in £155 10s worth of crest cloth, canvas and Guernsey cloth with three non-Exonian partners, and John Blackaller who brought in £173 worth of canvas with Hurst and three other Dartmouth men.

established Exeter men. The Dartmouth Water Bailiffs accounts contain less evidence of the presence of the Exeter men using that port in the first four decades of the sixteenth century .However, John Bodleigh, stated in the Dartmouth accounts to be from Exeter, brought in a substantial cargo of Cornish tin in 1546. William Hurst brought in canvas into Dartmouth the following year.<sup>1114</sup>

By the 1550s there is still substantial evidence of Exeter men trading through Dartmouth. In 1557, 17 traders can be identified as Exeter men.<sup>1115</sup> The majority of these were involved in only one or two ventures. They were sending out cargoes of cloth without grain, tin, lead and there was some re-direction of iron. The Exeter men brought in crest cloth, canvas, black and white soap, iron, woad, wax, hops, non-sweet wine, onions and some, probably re-directed, cloth without grain. Thomas Martyn brought in four consignments of goods to Dartmouth and his grandfather, William Hurst sent out four. The Water Bailiffs accounts for the 1550s record a large cargo of Cornish tin brought in by William Hurst with his son John and his son-in-law John Drake as well as four ventures by John Wekes, the Exeter trader.<sup>1116</sup> Overall, however, the cargoes shipped through Dartmouth by the Exeter men suggest that the values involved were not as high by the later 1550s as they had been in the 1530s and 40s.

By the 1560s there is less evidence of Exeter men using Dartmouth for their trade in the national customs account.<sup>1117</sup> In 1562 twelve Exeter men can be identified. All but one made one shipment out of the port and that person made only two. The value of the consignments was lower overall and most fell below £10, though William Hurst sent out tin valued by the customer at £66 13s 4d and John Wekes brought in goods valued by the customer at £64 with goods sent out calculated as worth £42. The Water Bailiffs accounts contain no conclusive reference to Exeter traders in Dartmouth in that decade.<sup>1118</sup> Overall, this suggests that Exeter merchants were less concerned with the Dartmouth trade in the 1560s.

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<sup>1114</sup> Duchy of Cornwall Office, Dartmouth/WBAcc/2-7.

<sup>1115</sup> TNA, E122/45/11.

<sup>1116</sup> Duchy of Cornwall Office, Dartmouth/WBAcc/8-10.

<sup>1117</sup> TNA, E122/46/11.

<sup>1118</sup> Duchy of Cornwall Office, Dartmouth/WBAcc/11-15.

Dartmouth was certainly the principal port through which Exeter merchants worked outside their home one. There is some significant evidence of Exeter men trading there in the late-fifteenth and earlier decades of the sixteenth centuries but the number of Exeter merchants using the port of Dartmouth increased substantially in the 1530s and the 1540s. This was perhaps due to an overall fall in overall trade leading Exeter men to maximise all their trading opportunities.<sup>1119</sup> By this time Exeter traders had established much fuller control of the trade through their own home port. Further, Dartmouth itself was perhaps more susceptible to the incursions of the Exonians as it had declined in comparison with the late-fifteenth century.<sup>1120</sup> The controlling drive of the Exeter merchants can be seen to be going beyond the bounds of their own city and into influencing the trade of other towns. Those involved included the men at the top of Exeter's trading community such as William Hurst, though often the risk of ventures was shared with traders from other towns including Dartmouth. The South Devon port provided opportunities for more direct engagement in a different branch of trade, with the Channel Islands. By the late 1550s and 1560s the involvement of Exeter traders in Dartmouth noticeably lessened. This may be accounted for partly by the concentrations of the Exeter men on establishing their own trading company. However, prominent Exeter merchants such as William Hurst and John Peter continued to trade through Dartmouth, suggesting that they wished to maintain involvement in all aspects of the business of the trading community.

### *Barnstaple and Bridgwater*

From a study of a sample of four customs accounts spanning the decades from the 1490s to the 1560s there were few identifiable Exeter merchants using the North Devon ports, as their trading focus was not in this direction.<sup>1121</sup> No reference has been found to any land transportation of goods to this area from Exeter. Taylor concluded that Barnstaple had a relatively limited inland market and that its focus was primarily towards the Bristol Channel and its trade with Iberia.<sup>1122</sup> Youngs concluded that the economic fortunes of the town were only

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<sup>1119</sup> The fall in cloth exports recorded in the Enrolled Accounts is shown by Carus Wilson and Coleman, *England's Export Trade*, p.145.

<sup>1120</sup> Hoskins, *Devon*, p.107.

<sup>1121</sup> TNA, E122/201/2, 43/11, 43/17, 46/11.

<sup>1122</sup> Taylor, 'Maritime Trade', pp.16-45.

really undergoing a revival from the late 1550s.<sup>1123</sup> Barnstaple probably had little economic attraction for the Exeter traders at this time. The only evidence is provided by the customs account for 1498/99 when three prominent Exeter men, namely: John Symon (mayor in 1512 and 1523), Robert Symon (receiver in 1481) and Thomas Andrew (mayor in 1504 and 1510) are recorded on seven voyages importing and exporting through Barnstaple.<sup>1124</sup>

The published edition of the Bridgwater borough archives for the years from 1468 to 1485 contains only one reference to contacts with Exeter. The Exeter tailor John Wulcot entered into a bond for £3 6s 8d with the prominent Bridgwater merchant John Kendall payable in April 1483.<sup>1125</sup> An exploration of the extant national customs records for the port of Bridgwater was undertaken to see if Exeter men were trading there. There is also a series of six Bridgwater Water Bailiff's accounts extant for the years between 1504 and 1565 but no Exeter men are recorded.<sup>1126</sup> This was confirmed by the evidence from the national particulars of account as Bridgwater's trading records in 1522/23 and 1542/3 and 1568/69 contain no reference to Exeter men.<sup>1127</sup> This further suggests that contact between the two towns was not significant despite Taylor's argument that Bridgwater was a more important port than is evident from the national customs accounts.<sup>1128</sup>

### *Bristol and Plymouth*

The edition of selected Bristol customs accounts by Flavin and Jones and the on-line material provided by the ROSE project and The Smugglers' City material makes it possible to examine 12 Bristol accounts dating from between 1496 and

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<sup>1123</sup> J. Youings, 'Tudor Barnstaple; New Life for an Ancient Borough', *TDA* 121, 1989, pp.1-14

<sup>1124</sup> TNA, E122/201/2. The three traders appear but are not designated as Exeter men in the accounts but this is less significant as no home ports were recorded for any of the traders in that account by the Barnstaple official. They took mainly cloth (white straits) out of Barnstaple and brought in wine, honey, iron, pitch, resin, and woad ('guald', so probably French woad).

<sup>1125</sup> R.W. Dunning and T.D. Tremlett, ed., *Bridgwater Borough Archives, V, 1468-1485*, Somerset Record Society, 70, 1971, pp. 73-74.

<sup>1126</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton D/B/bw/1428-1441 Bridgwater Water Bailiffs' Accounts.

<sup>1127</sup> TNA, E122/27/6, 27/18; E190/1081/5.

<sup>1128</sup> Taylor, 'Maritime Trade', pp.46-84.

1564.<sup>1129</sup> There is little recorded reference to the activities of Exeter merchants in the port of Bristol. A possible exception is that frequently in 1503/04, and once in 1516, a William Hurst is recorded as a trader, but no place of residence was given.<sup>1130</sup> This may have been the Exeter merchant trading through Bristol at an early point in his career. In 1523 Hurst brought a debt case against John Sessell, a Bristol mercer, in Common Pleas.<sup>1131</sup>

A further exception occurred in December 1525 when the 'Mary Spert' of Bristol was recorded as having entered the port under the mastership of Robert Spert, who was mayor of Dartmouth in 1527 and 1528.<sup>1132</sup> It brought into Bristol the goods of Exeter merchants John Blackaller, John More, John Seller, Gilbert Kirk, John Way, Roger Perry and John Maynard, along with the goods of eight other traders, three of whom can be identified as Dartmouth men.<sup>1133</sup> The account gives no port of origin for the ship and no place of connection is recorded by the customer for any of the shippers. They brought in wine, great raisins, ginger, cloves, sugar, pepper, mace, grains, cinnamon, nutmeg, marmalade and fruit.<sup>1134</sup> These were probably products of the Portuguese empire sent from Lisbon. John Maynard's four hundred weights of pepper carried the highest valuation of £20. In March 1526 John Maynard also brought in more spices on the 'Savyour' of Bristol amidst a large number of 33 other shippers, which included no other known Exeter men.<sup>1135</sup>

The trade of Exeter men was not sustained as there are few references to them later in Bristol. In July 1564 the 'Trinity' of Topsham brought in a large quantity of iron worth £140 and alum worth £20, the goods of Richard Strobridge. The

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<sup>1129</sup> Flavin and Jones, *Bristol's Trade*; ROSE project  
[www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/datasets.htm](http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/datasets.htm);

[www.bris.ac.uk/Departments/History/Maritime/Sources/1496cabotroll.htm](http://www.bris.ac.uk/Departments/History/Maritime/Sources/1496cabotroll.htm)

<sup>1130</sup> Flavin and Jones, *Bristol's Trade*, pp.13, 14, 21, 23-24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 37, 41, 53, 61, 72, 80, 90, 91, 96, 99, 111. William Hurst entered the Exeter freedom in 1504/05. The quantities of goods traded by Hurst here were always small and sent as part of a venture with a number of other merchants, which could indicate a man at the start of his career. The goods were mainly wine and some woad from Bordeaux as well as La Rochelle and from Chepstow, oil from Lisbon, and iron from Spain. There were also three recorded cargoes of cloth sent to Spain. Hurst was also recorded as shipping wine from Bordeaux to Bristol in 1516.

<sup>1131</sup> See Appendix 28; TNA, CP 40/1038.

<sup>1132</sup> H.R. Watkin, *Dartmouth, Volume 1-Pre-Reformation*, Devonshire Association Parochial Histories of Devon, Volume 5, Exeter 1935, p.185.

<sup>1133</sup> Flavin and Jones, *Bristol's Trade*, pp.203-204.

<sup>1134</sup> Kermes, known as Guinea grains or melaguetta pepper.

<sup>1135</sup> Flavin and Jones, *Bristol's Trade*, p.237.

large quantities suggesting this was the same man who was one of the wealthier traders through Exeter.<sup>1136</sup> By the 1570s no Exeter men were recorded as trading in Bristol.

The attractions of Plymouth as a port for Exeter merchants were limited. Gill's history of Plymouth contains no reference to links with Exeter at this time.<sup>1137</sup> Plymouth's role in the cloth trade in the early-sixteenth century was fairly small though its tin trade was noted by Hatcher as being greater than that of Exeter or Dartmouth.<sup>1138</sup> Plymouth's importation of wine has been seen as more significant and the port was a key centre for importing fish.<sup>1139</sup> However, Stephens notes that even by 1578 Plymouth was collecting less than a quarter of the customs revenue of Exeter and Cornford argues that the town's fortunes really soared after 1585.<sup>1140</sup> Plymouth merchants were, however, trading through Exeter.<sup>1141</sup> Of the four sample particulars of account from the 1480s, 1520s, 1540s and 1560s only one, for 1487/88, provided strong evidence of Exeter men trading through Plymouth. In October 1487 Richard Undey (mayor of Exeter in 1498) exported cloth, worked tin and tanned calfskins through Plymouth.<sup>1142</sup>

### *The Dorset ports*

Trade with the Dorset ports was of some importance to Exeter. Lacey notes that Lyme merchants were bringing cargoes into Exeter at the end of the fifteenth

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<sup>1136</sup> Ibid., pp. 644, 664.

<sup>1137</sup> C. Gill, *Plymouth: A New History*, Newton Abbot, 1993, pp.100-105, 110-111, 120-121.

<sup>1138</sup> Hatcher, *English Tin Production*, pp.126-129.

<sup>1139</sup> Youings, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', p.102.

<sup>1140</sup> W.B. Stephens, 'The Foreign Trade of Plymouth in the Early Seventeenth Century', *TDA*, 86, 1954, p.126; P. Cornford, 'The Trade of Elizabethan Plymouth' within Youings, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', p.105.

<sup>1141</sup> TNA, E122 44/9, 45/1, 45/2, 45/5, 45/9, 46/1, 46/9, 46/13; DHC, ECA, TC 1560/61.

The Exeter certificate books record that some ships were being sent out to Plymouth in the late 1550s and early 1560s though there had been more in the mid-1550s. A peak for the period studied was reached in 1560/61 when the Exeter customer noted five Plymouth merchants. The Exeter coastal port books after 1565 record some ships bringing goods from Plymouth to Exeter but record fewer the other way and even less trade is recorded between the two ports in 1569/70.

<sup>1141</sup> TNA, E190/927/3, 927/11.

<sup>1142</sup> TNA, E122/115/3 for 1487/88. Richard Orange is also recorded twice exporting cloth and onions but this could have been the Exeter man or a trader from Dartmouth as the name occurs in both towns at the time. E122/206/5 1522-24 records one shipment of Cornish tin out of the port by William Webb but it cannot be stated that it was definitely the Exeter trader. E122/116/17 (1543/44) and E122/118/5 (1562-64) contain no evidence.

century. He identified a reasonable trade using the port of Lyme in 1487/88.<sup>1143</sup> Lyme became the highest recorded coastal destination in the certificate books for ships leaving Exeter in the mid-1550s, though it had fallen a little by 1566/67 and 1569/70<sup>1144</sup>. Lyme customs accounts for the earlier period are often in bad condition.<sup>1145</sup> Accounts for the 1480s, 1530s, 1550s and 1560s were sampled and this provided a few instances of Exeter merchants using the port.<sup>1146</sup> In April 1555 one entry recorded William Hurst shipping vitry (canvas)<sup>1147</sup> and woollen cloth on the 'John Seton' and John Blackall sent Cornish tin, lead, woollen cloth and wine on the 'Peter' of Charmouth. Also in 1560-61 George Peryman and Edmund Whetcombe jointly transported woollen cloth. In 1564/65 George Peryman and John Dore were referred to as merchants and citizens of the city of Exeter, but no cargoes were stated.

Weymouth emerged as a recorded destination for Exeter's coastal trade in 1552 and continued to be so for the rest of that decade. The Exeter certificate books show that Weymouth was the highest listed destination for coastwise vessels leaving the port of Exeter in 1569 and its importance is confirmed by the port book of 1569/70.<sup>1148</sup> A new destination for Exeter's trade was emerging but Exeter merchants are not identified as having any involvement in the most recent study of that town.<sup>1149</sup>

Poole was also recorded as a destination for Exeter's coastal trade from 1552 and in the Exeter port books for 1566/67 and 1569/70.<sup>1150</sup> Poole was a potential base for Exeter mercantile activities and its historian has noted its economic prosperity up to the 1580s.<sup>1151</sup>

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<sup>1143</sup> P. Lacey, *Ebb and Flow: The Story of Maritime Lyme Regis*, Wimborne Minster, 2011, pp. 36-37, 50-52. In 1487/88 Lacey notes 62 shipping movements in the port.

<sup>1144</sup> TNA, E122/44/9, 45/1, 45/2, 45/5, 45/9, 46/1, 46/9, 46/13; E190/95/14, 927/11.

<sup>1145</sup> TNA, E122/163/2, 4 and 4/5.(1485 and 1488/89). These earlier accounts are in bad condition.

<sup>1146</sup> TNA, E122/92/1, 92/2A, 122/12, 215/6.

<sup>1147</sup> Vitry canvas was a light durable canvas from Vitre in Brittany: McGrath, *Merchants* p.298.

<sup>1148</sup> TNA, E122/46/13 and E190/927/3, 927/11; DHC, ECA, TC 1560/61.

<sup>1149</sup> Crump, *Medieval Weymouth*.

<sup>1150</sup> TNA, E122/44/9, 45/1, 45/5; E190/95/14, 927/3, 927/11.

<sup>1151</sup> Tittler, 'Vitality'.



## *Southampton and London*

Southampton's published customs accounts demonstrate an important trading link for Exeter in the earlier part of the period.<sup>1152</sup> Thomas Bond was listed in them as a 'freeman of Excestre' (he was receiver in 1486). He brought tin into Southampton in 1470 and woad with tin in 1481. Bond's role in working with merchants from Southampton and London is discussed in Appendix 12. In his venture in 1470 five of his co-shippers are noted as being freemen of London and in the second in 1481 two were freemen of London and one from the honour of Wallingford. In May 1481 Nicholas Browne, recorded as 'of Excestre', sent out woad on the boat of Robert Browne of Exeter. This was an alias for Robert Sherman, one of Exeter's principal merchants.<sup>1153</sup>

The published edition of the Southampton port book for 1509-10 reveals no Exeter traders in the port beyond one shipment of fish.<sup>1154</sup> Evidence of land trade between Exeter and Southampton identified by the Southampton brokerage books and the Winchester English Inland Trade Project is discussed elsewhere in this study.<sup>1155</sup> The Exeter certificate books of the late 1550s and 1560s, and the port books of the later 1560s, show that Southampton was still a reasonably consistent destination for Exeter's coastal trade.<sup>1156</sup> However, the links had declined in the sixteenth century as Southampton underwent considerable economic difficulties symbolised by the quartering of its original fee farm by the Crown in 1552.<sup>1157</sup>

The greater Exeter merchants maintained trading links with London. John Colshill the younger was a member of the council of the London Merchant Adventurers' Company in 1519 and Thomas Andrew was a member of the Company in the early-sixteenth century.<sup>1158</sup> Exeter merchants were sending cloth into London by road at the turn of the sixteenth century. The records

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<sup>1152</sup> D.B. Quinn, ed., *The Port Book or Local Customs Accounts of Southampton for the Reign of Edward IV*, 2 vols, Southampton Record Society, 37 and 38, 1937 and 1938.

<sup>1153</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.1, p.18, Vol. 2, pp.158, 172.

<sup>1154</sup> T.B. James, ed., *The Port Book of Southampton 1509-1510*, Volumes 1 and 2, Southampton Record Society, 32 and 33, 1990, p.124.

<sup>1155</sup> See 5.6; K.E. Stevens and T.E. Olding, ed., *The Brokage Books of Southampton 1477 and 1527-28*, Southampton Record Society, 28, 1985; M. Hicks, ed., *English Inland Trade 1430-1540: Southampton and its Region*, Oxford, 2015.

<sup>1156</sup> TNA, E122/ 44/9, 45/1, 45/5, 45/9, 46/9, 46/11, 46/13 and E190/95/14.

<sup>1157</sup> Platt, *Medieval Southampton*, pp.219-222.

<sup>1158</sup> See 5.1 and 4.3. See Appendix 25 on Colshill as a partner.

reveal a few points of contact used by Exeter men in the capital such as the Star Inn in Bread Street in 1501/2 and later, in the mid-sixteenth century, the Bell Inn in Carter Lane.<sup>1159</sup> However, the published London customs accounts for 1480-81 and for 1567/68 reveal no evidence of Exeter merchants being recorded by the London customer.<sup>1160</sup>

Evidence of Exeter men trading in London cannot be found though it is likely that some of Exeter's greater merchants such as Gilbert Kirk, who died in 1546 with a house in the capital, would have done so.<sup>1161</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Dartmouth was the principal port through which Exeter merchants worked outside their home one. There is significant evidence of Exeter men trading there in the late fifteenth and earlier decades of the sixteenth centuries but the number of Exeter merchants using the port of Dartmouth increased substantially in the 1530s and the 1540s. By the late 1550s and 1560s the involvement of Exeter traders in Dartmouth noticeably lessened.

Exeter merchants were less involved in trade through other ports, even in Devon. Plymouth did not have a significant attraction for the Exeter men. There was no real involvement in the North Devon ports or in Bridgwater. Bristol provided the opportunity for only a few ventures. Lyme, Weymouth and Poole were becoming more important trading connections by the mid sixteenth century, though the poor state of the customs accounts for Lyme makes this difficult to determine. In the Yorkist period Exeter traders like Thomas Bond had worked closely with merchants from Southampton and London. Later there is not much evidence of other Exeter merchants trading through these great ports. Southampton's economic decline made it a less attractive port for the Exeter men. It is possible that there is still evidence of their trading in London which remains undiscovered.

Overall, the Exeter men stuck to their home port. Perhaps this was part of that mentality which also limited the range of the trading ventures they undertook

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<sup>1159</sup> TNA, STAC1/2/78; DHC, ECA, Book 185 no.4; Carus Wilson, *Expansion of Exeter*, p.27.

<sup>1160</sup> H.S. Cobb, ed., *The Overseas Trade of London Exchequer Customs Accounts 1480-1481*, London Record Society, 27, 1990; Dietz, *Port and Trade*.

<sup>1161</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/31/6.

primarily to their familiar Franco-Iberian destinations. The Exeter merchants at this time had little need to find new and different markets as the port continued to prosper. The focus on trade through Exeter was also linked with their concentration on establishing their economic and political supremacy within the city itself.

## **5.6 DIVERSIFICATION AND MERCHANT WEALTH**

### *Introduction*

This section will explore some of the other areas into which the Exeter merchants diversified their economic interests. It will examine their ship-owning and argue that they were far more involved than has previously been supposed. There will also be a consideration of their role in cloth-selling. Exeter merchants were investing more in industrial enterprises both to the north and the west of the city. Finally, their expanding participation in property, both urban holdings and the purchasing of rural manors, will add a further dimension in showing how the Exeter merchants widened their economic role in the sixteenth century.

### *Merchant Ship-owning in Exeter 1470-1570*

#### **a) Sources and Methodology**

This section investigates the evidence of ship-owning by Exeter merchants and argues that it was greater than has previously been supposed. The role ship-owning played in the businesses of the trading community of Exeter at the time is also considered. Sixteen Exeter merchants have been identified as ship-owners in the period studied. Hoskins commented in his study of the Elizabethan merchants (which focuses on the later years) that 'No Exeter merchant was substantial enough to own a whole ship, or even half a ship. The great majority joined with half a dozen others to fill a ship with cargoes'.<sup>1162</sup> Kowaleski, in examining the goods owned by Roger Plente of Exeter, who died in 1375, notes that his son claimed that Roger owned a ship worth £80, but overall there is not much evidence of ship-owning by late-fourteenth century Exeter men. At that time Devon's shipping fleet was dominated by the ports of Dartmouth and Plymouth.<sup>1163</sup> It has been acknowledged that by the late fifteenth

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<sup>1162</sup> Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants', p.170.

<sup>1163</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.29-33, 253.

and earlier sixteenth centuries many ship-owners were merchants or ships' masters but more specific investigation has been of aristocratic and gentry ownership. Where merchant ownership is noted, the role of multiple-ownership of vessels has been stressed.<sup>1164</sup> In Bristol Vanes found that men owned shares in several ships and they frequently changed hands. In the sixteenth century shares of between a quarter and a sixteenth were most common and it was only rarely in the 1530s that merchants owned the whole of a ship.<sup>1165</sup> This was a significant decline from the end of the fourteenth century and fifteenth century in Bristol.<sup>1166</sup> Kermode has suggested that quarter shares in ships were the most common in the Yorkshire ports though shares of as low as a thirty-second of a ship were not unknown.<sup>1167</sup>

Exeter merchants have not been seen by historians as ship-owners. This view possibly has its origin in the Answer of the Exeter merchants to Lord Winchester in January 1557, quoted by Cotton in his study of the Company in 1873. It stated that 'They cannot execute his orders because no man of the County and City of Exeter hath any ship of his own - nor have any commission to take up ships, mariners, victuals or anything appertaining to ships for the wars out of their County and City'. Cotton then moves on to identify seven Exeter merchants as ship-owners in 1566, though only one as a sole owner.<sup>1168</sup> It is true that evidence of Exeter ship-owning from the officially compiled shipping lists of the time is sparse. Exeter does not appear as a home port for any ships of over 100 tons compiled in 1560.<sup>1169</sup> A list of the numbers of mariners and ships for 1570 does include the 'Marie Page' of 35 tons at Exmouth and records John Pope of Exeter, merchant, as its owner.<sup>1170</sup> Thomas Colshill's better known listing of all the merchant ships in English ports in 1572 gave 125 ships

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<sup>1164</sup> Childs, 'Devon Overseas Trade', p.85; Youngs, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', pp.102-103.

<sup>1165</sup> J. Vanes, *The Port of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1977, p.13.

<sup>1166</sup> E.M. Carus Wilson, *The Merchant Adventurers of Bristol in the Fifteenth Century*, Bristol Historical Association, 1962, p.16; J. Sherborne, *William Canynge 1402-1474*, Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1985, pp.9-11. Wealthy merchants owning private fleets were then significant in the port. By the 1480s William Canynge owned ten ships and Thomas Strange twelve.

<sup>1167</sup> Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p.212.

<sup>1168</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, pp.30-31.

<sup>1169</sup> TNA, SP12/11/27 Dartmouth had the most in Devon with 5 ships over 100 tons headed by the 'Mary Fortune', the largest in Devon at 200 tons.

<sup>1170</sup> TNA, SP12/71/75.

in 'Exwater' (the Exe Estuary) ranging in size from 80 to 8 tons. Names are given in a few instances but there are no records of ownership. A few surnames are included within the ships' names so we can identify the Exeter-owned 'Mary Martyn' and 'Mary Page'.<sup>1171</sup>

Identifying the ship-owning interests of the Exeter merchants involves searching a variety of archival material. The extant wills and inventories of Exeter merchants were consulted. Where disputes occurred some material exists for the court of Chancery. Locally John Hooker's role as a judge for the Court of Admiralty in the West led to him keeping records of cases dealt with there, which survive in his Waste Book. The records of the Merchants' Company in Exeter, in particular their Court Book were used. Government documents such as the Letters and Papers of Henry VIII are valuable, especially the Lisle correspondence. A new methodology was adopted in using the customs accounts which has provided further insights. This involved the analysis of 105 ships' names taken from the customs accounts across the whole period from 1470 to 1570 where the ship's name contained a surname. A merchant or other owner often used his name in the ship's name as a badge of his ownership. Even if the ship, or part of it, was sold it may give us an idea of the original ownership or, as ships frequently changed names, the new owner. These surnames were then linked with contemporary subsidy and muster returns, to try to identify where the ship's owner lived and if he was an Exeter merchant or a trader from elsewhere in Devon. This method provided a larger sample of ships to analyse with regard to their ownership.

Ship-owning provided a means by which the Exeter merchants could diversify their businesses in a convenient and accessible manner. Although some built up fleets of vessels this was exceptional and ship-owning as a specialist occupation was really only emerging by the 1540s. It was far more usual for merchants to own part of a ship than to be sole owners. This lessened the financial risks involved. After about 1550 commercial companies began to take on the ownership of vessels and prominent merchants would acquire extra

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<sup>1171</sup> TNA, SP15/22. A partial transcript of the list was published by Whitley in 1912 (Whitley, 'Maritime Trade', pp.530-546) but the original was consulted. Dartmouth had the largest number of vessels. Thomas Colshill was the Surveyor of the Port of London and probably compiled his list from the customs accounts dating from Michaelmas 1571 to Michaelmas 1572.

influence and control as part of their exercise of office within these companies.

<sup>1172</sup> Childs argues that the later fifteenth century was a period when ship-owning was not seen as very profitable, though Scammell has stressed the economic opportunities which ship-owning presented. Childs has made a wide ranging study of the shipping of the late-fifteenth century West Country counties but did not examine the ownership of it in detail.<sup>1173</sup>

#### b) Early Tudor Ship-owners and the 'Nautically-Inclined Potecary'.

In the early years more evidence survives concerning the ship-owning activities of Topsham men than Exeter men. However, ship's names at that time which can be connected to Exeter merchants include the 'Jerome Andrew' of Exeter, first recorded in 1508 and perhaps under the ownership of Thomas Andrew and the 'Michell Hewett' of Topsham, first recorded in the same year which might be linked with the wealthy Exeter merchant Richard Hewett. In addition the 'John Boddley' of Exeter, first recorded in 1509/10, could be linked with John Bodley. The 'Anne Hurst' first found in the customs accounts in 1526 was possibly owned by William Hurst.<sup>1174</sup> The 'Le Margaret Wynter,' first recorded in 1529, was possibly associated with John Wynter.<sup>1175</sup>

By the 1530s there is more evidence of Exeter men as ship-owners. These were not solely merchants but also included an apothecary. Scammell's 1962 study noted that 'a wide variety of diffusion of ownership' existed in shipping in early modern England, 'even a nautically-inclined potecary'.<sup>1176</sup> Here he must have been referring to Nicholas Lymet, the Exeter apothecary.<sup>1177</sup> In August

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<sup>1172</sup> G.V. Scammell, 'Ship-owning in England 1450-1550', *TRHS*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 12, 1962, pp.105-122; id., 'Ship-owning in the Economy and Politics of Early Modern England', *Historical Journal*, 15, 1972, pp.394-407.

<sup>1173</sup> Scammell, 'Ship-owning in the Economy'; id., 'Ship-owning in England'; Childs, 'Devon's Overseas Trade', p.85; Childs, 'Commercial Shipping' examines the shipping of Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset.

<sup>1174</sup> TNA, E122/42/9.

<sup>1175</sup> TNA, E122/201/3, 42/11.

<sup>1176</sup> Scammell, 'Shipowning in England', p.108; Scammell, 'Shipowning in the Economy', p.397.

<sup>1177</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.66; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.8, 36, 51; DHC, ECA, AB I f.149b, AB II ff. 74b, 78b, 104b; M. St Clare Byrne ed., *The Lisle Letters*, Vols. 1-6, Chicago, 1981, Vol. 1 pp.228, 452, 486, 494, 513, 544, 637. Lymet served the Lisle family as an apothecary and experienced difficulties in receiving payments. Lymet entered the Exeter freedom as an apothecary in 1512 and was living in St Martin in the 1520s and 1540s. He became a member of the city council in 1537 and progressed to becoming city receiver and sheriff, though never mayor. This may be

1530 Lymet sold a fourth share in the 'Mary Plantagenet' to Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle, thus making Lisle the sole owner of the vessel. He did not receive cash for his sale but instead an undertaking that he would be able to send 30 tons of merchandise on every voyage made by the ship overseas until the debt was repaid. Lymet was also, under the agreement, to receive an 18d per ton allowance thus reducing his lading costs. It seems likely that Lymet had gained his share in the vessel from the Exeter merchant John Cheriton, who had originally had the ship built. Cheriton had borrowed £40 from Lymet and had also entered a further obligation owing him over £86. Nicholas Lymet appears in the Exeter customs accounts as a trader, often as 'Nicholas Pottecare'. He is also included in a charter party drawn up for the 'Mary Plantagenet' in June 1532, along with three other merchants, under which he agreed to freight 30 tons of merchandise on a voyage from Topsham to the ports of Bordeaux and Bristol.<sup>1178</sup> For Lymet, involvement in ship-owning had probably derived from both his trading activities and his attempts to diversify his business interests.

#### c) Mid-Sixteenth Century Exeter Ship-owners

For some merchants shipbuilding and ship-owning could be ruinous. John Cheriton of Exeter was probably involved in the building and ownership of more than one ship but his fortunes fluctuated considerably and he is a good example of the impact of the uncertainties such activities which forced him to bring a case to Chancery. Cheriton, who was possibly the original builder of the 'Mary Plantagenet,' declared himself to be an Exeter merchant. He had taken out more than one loan from Lymet to help with his building of a new ship, then called the 'Marie Cheriton'. Cheriton claimed to have settled the debts but there were still outstanding obligations, perhaps relating to when he had paid. The ship is referred to as 'lying in the water of Exmouth.'<sup>1179</sup> His letters to Lord Lisle

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explained by the fact that in May 1550 he was excused from attending council meetings as 'a man impotent and derke of his sight'.

<sup>1178</sup> *Letters and Papers Henry VIII* Vol. 4, nos.3, 6566; TNA, C1/694/35; Byrne, *Lisle Letters*, Vol. 1, pp.246-249, 397-399.

<sup>1179</sup> TNA, C1/694/35; *Exeter Freeman*, p.68; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.13, 14, 42, 46, 50. John Cheriton entered the freedom in 1518/19 as an apprentice of the merchant John Bryttenoll. Cheriton is listed in the Military Survey of 1522 in both St Paul and St Mary Major but both entries have deletions so their accuracy is uncertain. He was listed in the lay subsidy for 1524/5 in St Mary Major paying on goods worth £10. By 1544 a John Cheriton was resident in the

suggest that he spent little time in Exeter as he was working elsewhere as Lisle's agent. Letters were sent by him from Bordeaux and Pisa in 1533, Greenwich and London in 1534, and Marseilles in 1536 and 1538.<sup>1180</sup> Cheriton concentrated his ambitions outside the city.

Ships could change ownership fairly frequently as cases involving Topsham and Taunton men in the 1530s show.<sup>1181</sup> Ship-owning also existed in the middle ranks of Exeter's trading elite. Robert Cotton, an Exeter merchant, was noted as the co-owner of the 'Nicholas' of Exmouth with John Stevens of St Ives and John Martyn of Exmouth.<sup>1182</sup> Cotton was not one of the most prosperous of the Exeter merchants.<sup>1183</sup>

#### d) Exeter Ship-owners in the 1560s

By the 1560s there is more evidence that Exeter merchants were actively engaged in ship-owning. By 1564 Henry Maunder was identified as owning a 'halfe a quarter' share of a 'barke' (suggesting a small ship) called the 'Dragon' of Topsham.<sup>1184</sup> In 1565 George Hunt owned a half of a ship called the 'George'.<sup>1185</sup> These shares had fairly low valuations at £8 and £30 respectively.<sup>1186</sup> From the customs accounts we know that by 1561 the 'Dragon', which Henry Maunder part-owned, was trading to and from Exeter very regularly and has Topsham given as its port of connection.<sup>1187</sup> Members of the Trosse family

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same parish paying on goods worth 20 shillings, whereas a man of the same name paid on £3 worth of goods in St Petrock.

<sup>1180</sup> Byrne, *Lisle Letters*, Vol. 2, pp.165, 302, Vol. 5, pp.558-560.

<sup>1181</sup> TNA, C1/717/23, HCA 38/1/6 and Index of Cases Volume 1, Proceedings in the High Court of Admiralty Instance and Prize. In the 1530s a case was brought to Chancery concerning actions taken in the Admiralty Court held at the Grey Friars in Exeter. The ship was the 'Margaret Mychell' of Topsham. Roger Hyll (a prominent Taunton trader) had owned the vessel and it had passed to Roger Jones of Topsham and then to John Fisher of Taunton and John Selman of Topsham as joint owners.

<sup>1182</sup> TNA, HCA Index of Cases Vol. 1, Proceedings in the High Court of Admiralty Instance and Prize Courts.

<sup>1183</sup> He was assessed on £30 of goods in St Mary Arches in 1544 and on £6 in the same parish in 1557; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.50, 56.

<sup>1184</sup> DHC, ECA, Orphans' Court Inventory no.2.

<sup>1185</sup> Ibid. no.7. Crocker in her recent edition of the transcripts of the Elizabethan Orphans' Court Inventories includes those of both Maunder and Hunt and notes these ownerships. Crocker, *Elizabethan Wills and Inventories*, Vol. 1, pp. xix, 18-30.

<sup>1186</sup> DHC, ECA, Orphans' Court Inventory no.7; Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants', pp.170-171.

<sup>1187</sup> TNA, E122/46/11.



were usually listed as the ship's master.<sup>1188</sup> The other part-owners were probably William Hurst and Simon Knight. Knight had been Hurst's apprentice and was frequently his business associate. They were by far the most frequent shippers of goods on the 'Dragon': Hurst 14 times and Knight 11 between 1561 and 1565, making it likely that they owned a share in the vessel.<sup>1189</sup> The Port Books after 1565 give us more detailed information on the 'Dragon' carrying goods to and from the port of Exeter and this has been traced up to 1570. Up until 1568 William Hurst was nearly always listed as a shipper and Simon Knight also regularly laded goods on the vessel. After Hurst's death one of the principal shippers was his grandson Nicholas Martin, who most likely had taken over Hurst's part-ownership of the 'Dragon'. It will be seen below that Hurst, Knight and one of the other Martin brothers were involved in the joint ownership of another ship coming into the port of Exeter by 1566. The Martin family continued to be key shippers on the 'Dragon' up until 1570.<sup>1190</sup>

The Merchants' Company Court Book provides more evidence of ship-owning by Exeter men. In July 1566 the 'Michael' of Exeter was noted as being owned by the Exeter merchants Eustace Oliver and Thomas Browne, while Robert Vinton owned the 'Bartholomew' of Exeter. The ships were both 40 tons and were bound for Malaga. In addition the 'Mary Martyn,' a ship of 40 tons, was owned by William Hurst, Simon Knight and Thomas Martyn (one of William Hurst's grandsons). The ship was bound for Algarbe (Algarve) in Portugal. In August 1566 the 'Michael' of Exeter was to lade raisins and the same cargo was to be carried by the 'Bartholomew'. The 'Mary Martyn' was to lade figs and the same three merchants were again noted as the joint owners of the vessel.<sup>1191</sup> There is no evidence of any corporate ship-owning in the records of the Exeter Merchants' Company between 1558 and 1570. They were seemingly not as

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<sup>1188</sup> TNA, C3/35/19; *Exeter Freeman*, p.83; DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.33b; DHC, ECA, Orphans Court Inventory no. 4. William and John Trosse are noted in the customs account but then this more consistently becomes Richard Trosse. Richard Trosse of Woodbury was mentioned in Henry Maunder's probate inventory in 1564 as owing Maunder £4 under a bill obligatory. John Trosse was an Exeter merchant at the time.

<sup>1189</sup> TNA, E122/46/11; DHC, ECA, TC 3/4, 4/5, 5/6, 6/7 Eliz. I.

<sup>1190</sup> TNA, E190/925/6, 925/7, 925/14, 926/9, 927/3, 927/7, 927/11.

<sup>1191</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.22a; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, pp.31-32.

organised as their counterparts in York who not only had ship-owning partnerships but also chartered ships.<sup>1192</sup>

The records of the High Court of Admiralty and the notes kept by John Hooker in his 'Waste Book,' provide further information on Exeter ship-owning. Hooker, serving as a judge for the Admiralty Court in the West, kept some records of cases and proceedings in 1566 and 1567, 1569 and 1570. He included a copy of a 'certyfycatt for buyldyng' of a ship of one hendrethe and upwardes' sent by Sir Arthur Champernowne, Devon's Vice Admiral, to Lord Clinton, the Lord High Admiral.<sup>1193</sup> It states that 'one JW of the county of Exeter, merchant, has 'buylded and furnished within the haven of Bedefford (Bideford) yn the countie of Devon one ship of the portage and bourdon of too hundrethe fiftye tonnes'. Champernowne had verified this. The builder would then be able to claim a bounty from the Crown.<sup>1194</sup> Who this 'JW' was is a matter of speculation, perhaps John Midwinter, who was sometimes referred to as 'John Wynter' in the contemporary records and due to his wealth he seems the most likely.<sup>1195</sup>

Ship-owning provided the opportunity for ancillary business activities.<sup>1196</sup>

George Peryman, a prominent Exeter merchant was involved in a case heard by the Admiralty Court in January 1567, reported by John Hooker, which concerned his sale of anchors and other ship's material.

William Hurst was the most likely Exeter merchant ship-owner at this time. He may have owned the 'Anne Hurst' as stated earlier. It also seems from the above that he was also the co-owner of the 'Mary Martyn', first recorded in 1564/65 and usually given Topsham as the port of connection. From the later customs accounts we know that this ship's tonnage was 30 tons and that at this time John White of Powderham was engaged as the ship's master.<sup>1197</sup> If we also include the previously mentioned 'Dragon', trading through the port in the 1560s, we can associate Hurst with the ownership, or more likely part ownership, of three vessels. Simon Knight was linked with the ownership of two

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<sup>1192</sup> Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp.212-213.

<sup>1193</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 57 ff.156-188.

<sup>1194</sup> Ibid. f.156.

<sup>1195</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 ff.1a, 7a, 28b-29a, 33b. It was possibly John Watkyns but comparison with the surviving membership lists within the Merchants' Company records is inconclusive.

<sup>1196</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 57 f.173.

<sup>1197</sup> TNA, E190/925/6, 925/7, 925/14, 926/1, 926/9/, 927/11.

ships. The Exeter men were not owners of shipping fleets but it does seem that for a few of them ship-owning was a significant element of their businesses.

#### e) Conclusion

More Exeter men were involved in ship-owning than had previously been supposed. This was true throughout the period from 1470 to 1570, but the incidence increased towards the end of the period. They were usually part owners rather than full owners, though the latter was not unknown. Elsewhere in England part ownership by merchants was much more usual by the sixteenth century. Exeter men were not as wide ranging in their ship-ownership as the Bristol merchants of the sixteenth century, and certainly not the Bristol fleet owners, of the fifteenth century. Ship-owning provided another form of investment and diversification of business for the Exeter traders. No corporate ownership of vessels has been identified in Exeter at the time but this was only beginning elsewhere in England by the 1550s. Not all of the Exeter ship-owners were merchants, as the activities of the apothecary Nicholas Lymet testifies. Many of the Exeter ship-owners were members of the top rung of the city's political elite but ownership was spread more widely amongst the ranks of the Exeter traders than might have been supposed. Of the 16 Exeter men identified as ship-owners, six of them were men who served as mayor of the city on more than one occasion. A further one was mayor once and another one served as the city receiver. However, four further ship-owners rose to become city bailiffs and two of them entered the council. Two others became city freemen but did not hold civic office and a further two who were identified as Exeter merchants in the contemporary records cannot be traced in the ranks of the city elite.

In the port of Exeter at this time there is no evidence of the emergence of ship-owning as a specialist occupation. Similarly, none of the merchants owned a fleet of ships, though it was not unknown for the traders to part-own three or four vessels. Ships were treated as a form of convenient financial investment, changed hands fairly regularly, and provided an opportunity for involvement in some ancillary activities associated with shipbuilding. Overall, the Exeter ship-owner was often, but not exclusively, an actively trading merchant who sought primarily to diversify and further his business and investments.

## *Exeter Cloth Sellers, Cloth Trade and Clothiers*

Trading in cloth was a vital part of the businesses of the Exeter merchants. Throughout the period cloth was their major import and export commodity. This section will examine the importance of their role in cloth-selling in Devon in the late fifteenth century, their land traffic and the evidence of their cloth selling activities in London in the 1550s.

The role Exeter men in the sale of cloth can be considered by using the Aulnage accounts in the National Archives. They are only extant for Exeter for the years from 1467 to 1479 within the period covered in this study.<sup>1198</sup> Pearse Chope provided some partial transcripts and discussion of them in 1912, which are very helpful, and Kowaleski used the earlier, more reliable ones.<sup>1199</sup> Despite the serious reservations raised about the veracity of aulnage accounts by Carus Wilson they have been analysed here.<sup>1200</sup> The successful use of them by Amor for Ipswich, and subsequently further afield,<sup>1201</sup> and by Hare for Salisbury and the Wiltshire towns,<sup>1202</sup> demonstrate their value. Bridbury specifies they can tell us where cloth was examined and sealed, and from this where it was likely that it was sold, but not where it was made.<sup>1203</sup>

The aulnage accounts for 1467- 69 provide more detailed information on the location of trading as they give specific towns in Devon where the cloth was sealed.<sup>1204</sup> The number of cloths aulnaged in Exeter ranked second, significantly below the joint entry for Totnes and Plymouth.<sup>1205</sup> Only 25% (9) of the sellers in Exeter recorded then can be identified as Exeter men. Three can be verified from other records as mercers, two as merchants and one shearman and a goldsmith plus one unknown, and one uncertain.

The aulnage accounts for the mid and later 1470s contain the names of more cloth sellers but they are not arranged by locality, grouping together all of Devon

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<sup>1198</sup> TNA, E101/347/10-11, 338/14-20.

<sup>1199</sup> R. Pearse-Chope, 'The Aulnager in Devon', *TDA*, 44, 1912, pp. 568-590; Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.147-149.

<sup>1200</sup> Carus Wilson, 'Aulnage Accounts', pp.114-123.

<sup>1201</sup> Amor, *Late Medieval Ipswich*, p.106; id., *From Wool to Cloth*, pp. 4-8, 11-13, 30-31, 131-32, 220-221.

<sup>1202</sup> Hare, *Prospering Society*, pp.176-188.

<sup>1203</sup> A.R. Bridbury, *Medieval English Clothmaking: An Economic Survey*, London, 1982, p.73.

<sup>1204</sup> TNA, E101/338/14, 15.

<sup>1205</sup> Ibid. Pearse-Chope, 'Aulnager' p.587.

and Cornwall. Those for the years from 1471-75 were submitted by five different officials.<sup>1206</sup> An analysis of the account for 1474/75 reveals 177 vendors of whom 43 (24%) were identified from other sources as Exeter men.<sup>1207</sup>

Comparison can be made with the Exeter freedom records and other records giving occupational data in order to establish the role of the merchants in cloth selling. The occupations of nearly two-thirds of them are known (63%) and of these 13 were merchants, mercers or merchant-mercers, 6 were tailors and there was a draper a sheerman and a barber. There were also local gentlemen/legal officials. Exeter cloth-sellers in 1475, presenting for aulnage, were therefore mostly merchants and mercers but tailors were significantly involved. Over half (22) of the Exeter sellers were civic officials including 11 men who attained the mayoralty, 5 the receivership and 6 who became bailiffs. The Exeter cloth-sellers were, therefore mostly within the city elite. This is similar, though not as extreme, as the situation in late-fourteenth century Exeter when Kowaleski calculated that 78% of the cloth aulnaged by Exeter men was by those who served in high office and 85% by merchants.<sup>1208</sup>

Comparisons with the customs accounts establish which Exeter men presenting cloth for aulnage were involved in overseas trading.<sup>1209</sup> Eleven of the Exeter men can be identified as importers in 1473/74. Six of them made four or more shipments into the port. Four of the traders: Philip and John Atwill (both merchants), Robert Bonefant and John Taylor brought in five or more shipments of Breton crest cloth and so were heavily engaged in cloth trading. A small group of Exeter men were therefore some of the key cloth traders in Devon in the mid-1470s.

The aulnage accounts for 1475 to 1479 contain far fewer names than those for the earlier 1470s.<sup>1210</sup> They were used effectively, with caution, by Hare in studying Wiltshire.<sup>1211</sup> The significantly lower number of sellers recorded makes them less useful. Nevertheless it is possible to identify Exeter men and the

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<sup>1206</sup> TNA, E101/338, 16-20.

<sup>1207</sup> TNA, E101/338/20

<sup>1208</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.148-149.

<sup>1209</sup> DHC, ECA, TC 13/14 Edward IV; TNA, E122/41/5a. The Town Customs for 1473/74 was used as the nearest dated 'Particulars of Custom account' is partial and in poor condition.

<sup>1210</sup> TNA, E101/347/10-11. Richard More compiled the aulnage accounts for 1475 to 1479. He was the official who committed the frauds alleged by Carus Wilson.

<sup>1211</sup> Hare, *Prospering Society*, pp.176-188.

number of cloths they presented. There were some prominent merchants involved in cloth-selling. A few men are given designated occupations in the accounts as a dyer, a mercer and a tin merchant.

The Exeter aulnage accounts thus shed some light on its cloth-sellers. Exeter men were important in the cloth trade at this time but they were not the majority within the Devon market. A significant number of the key Exeter cloth-sellers were merchants and were members of the city elite. Men from other occupations were very involved, especially tailors. Some of those having cloth aulnaged were also overseas traders, as in the fourteenth century, but the extent of merchant domination over artisans in the trade was less than that identified by Kowaleski in the earlier century.<sup>1212</sup>

Exeter merchants were involved in the inland trade in cloth and other commodities. Cloth was carried from and to Exeter by the inland routes, though few records survive to evidence this. The Exeter carriers Michael Sweetlady and William Naynowe made depositions in Star Chamber concerning disputed scavage payments in London in 1502. Scavage (meaning 'showing') was a duty imposed on non-resident merchants bringing goods to be shown or displayed for sale within the city precincts.<sup>1213</sup> They declared that they had carried linen and other goods from Exeter to London for more than 35 years, from the early years of the reign of Edward IV to the early years of the reign of Henry VII. Richard Hewet, John Gomby and John Skrevener, all designated as Exeter merchants, declared that they had regularly brought merchandise to London but had dowlas (linen cloth) seized at Ludgate. Other Exeter men claimed that they had sent linen cloth and other goods to London with carriers in the 1470s, 80s and 90s. They stated that cloth had been sold at the Star Inn in Bread Street.<sup>1214</sup> A further London scavage dispute, in 1564, shows that William Hurst had various types of cloth seized in the parish of All Saints in Bread Street Ward.

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<sup>1212</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp. 22-25, 147-149.

<sup>1213</sup> C. Gross, *The Early English Customs System*, Cambridge, Mass. 1918, pp. 33-35.

<sup>1214</sup> TNA, STAC 1/2/78; C1/46/60; DHC, ECA, ED/M/946; Book 51 f.36a. The cases are discussed in Carus Wilson, *Expansion of Exeter*, pp. 26-27. John Guscote stated that he had sent linen cloth to London with the carriers from 1473 to 1483 and Robert Bonyfant that he had sent linen and other wares between 1475 and 1489. John Wilkyns had sent linen cloth to London by carrier between 1489 and 1495. John Bottler from 1488 to 1499 and John Nordon from 1492 to 1501. For scavage see Gross, *Early English Customs*, pp.33-35. The Star Chamber case is also available in Leadam, *Select Cases before the King's Council*, pp.71-95.

Hurst and John Periam also had goods seized in London in 1563.<sup>1215</sup> The London mercer Thomas Kitson bought Devonshire cloth from John Chasty, an Exeter carrier in 1531.<sup>1216</sup>

The Southampton brokerage books also provide evidence for some inland trading by pack horse between the towns, in cloth and other goods. In 1478 five entries include 43 dozen straits entering Southampton from Exeter and 12 kerseys and 2 cloths and some more cloth and bowstaves, sent out of Southampton to Exeter, loaded on two horses and three horses respectively. In 1528 12 and 14 fardels of canvas belonging to the prominent Exeter merchant Thomas Prestwood were sent to Salisbury from Southampton, one load in two carts. Inns were at the centre of cloth trading and the Eagle and the New Inn have been identified as legal centres of cloth-selling in Exeter at this time.<sup>1217</sup> The inland cloth trade was perhaps a substantial part of merchants' businesses but much is unknown to us.<sup>1218</sup>

The evidence suggests that most merchants in Exeter were engaged in cloth retailing as well as some being involved in wholesaling in the sixteenth century. Kowaleski has contended that capitalist clothiers from merchant backgrounds were operating in Exeter in the late-fourteenth century, though a recent study by Lee has suggested that they may not have financed all aspects of cloth production and were only taking a partial role in the process. Lee has concluded that by 1500 clothiers existed whose role was putting out raw materials to workers who processed them in their own homes and returned them to him to sell.<sup>1219</sup> Only five clothiers are recorded in Devon in the Court of Common Pleas between 1480 and 1500 and Leland did not note any on his tour in 1542.

<sup>1220</sup> Clothiers are not recorded in the documents for early Tudor Exeter though,

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<sup>1215</sup> Harte et. al., *Description*, pp.614-15, 621, 895. In 1564 the goods were seized in the booth of Thomas Fydo. Fydo is recorded in the customs accounts as a Londoner trading to Exeter. Linen, holland, fustian, woollen cloth called red cloth and kerseys were seized, in total valued at £110.

<sup>1216</sup> J. Lee, *The Medieval Clothier*, Woodbridge, 2018, p.113.

<sup>1217</sup> Hare, 'Inns', pp.477-497. Hare bases his comments on R. Dymond, 'The Old Inns and Taverns of Exeter', *TDA*, 12, 1880, pp.390, 400. He disputes Kowaleski's estimates (*Local Markets*, p.125) of 35 inns in the late fourteenth century as being too high and suggests that many were perhaps alehouses and taverns.

<sup>1218</sup> Stevens and Olding, *Brokerage Books*, pp. 45, 52, 91, 97-98, 118, 173-174. In the earlier years there were other loads of wine and a cart of household goods sent to the Bishop of Exeter.

<sup>1219</sup> Lee, *Medieval Clothier*, p.2.

<sup>1220</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, pp.150-152, 272-73; Lee, *Medieval Clothier*, pp.134-136.

as discussed elsewhere in this study. Exeter ones appear in Common Pleas in 1546 and 1548 and in the Exeter Quarter Sessions in 1560, with the first mention in the freedom records being in 1567.<sup>1221</sup> Cloth was sold at fairs and inns in Exeter in the fifteenth century.<sup>1222</sup> The best-documented Exeter clothier is Richard Taylor who was described as a clothier in 1549 when he was part of the Catholic faction in the city at the time of the rebellion.<sup>1223</sup> Christopher Potter was designated as a merchant in 1546 and as a clothier in 1548, as a defendant in Common Pleas cases. He may have become a clothier as there is no evidence of him trading overseas in the customs accounts.<sup>1224</sup>

In the 1550s Exeter men were being fined for offences committed in selling cloth at the Blackwell Hall in London which are enrolled on the King's Remembrancer Memoranda Rolls.<sup>1225</sup> Ten Exeter men were fined (mostly 20s) between 1550 and 1557.<sup>1226</sup> The offences were nearly all for presenting cloth underweight, though the tailor Henry Harris was fined the lesser amount of 13s 4d for selling Devonshire dozens which had been hot pressed.<sup>1227</sup> The cloths were mostly lighter, better quality kerseys with some cheaper dozens or Devonshire dozens. Most cloths were white, presumably undyed, though there was also a medley of coloured kerseys and one offence concerning sheep coloured kerseys.

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<sup>1221</sup> See 3.1.

<sup>1222</sup> Lee, *Medieval Clothier*, pp.79, 104. Lee mentions a chapman from Bradford in Somerset who brought cloth to a fair in Exeter and the Eagle and the New Inn as places of sale.

<sup>1223</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.189; Youings, *Tuckers Hall*, p.229; DHC, ECA, AB IV f.44b; Exe Bridge Wardens' Accounts 8/9 Eliz. I; DHC, DD 36770; *Tudor Exeter*, p.56. He was also noted as a tucker and became master of his guild in 1560 but in 1566 he was referred to again as a clothier. He lived in St John where he was assessed on £9 worth of goods in 1557. He served as churchwarden there and in 1566 was appointed as a warden of Exe Bridge.

<sup>1224</sup> TNA, CP40/1127, 1135; *Tudor Exeter*, p.50; *Exeter Freeman*, p.75; DHC, ECA, Exeter St Petrock CW. Christopher Potter entered the freedom in 1541 and was perhaps a migrant to the city as he paid a £3 entry fine.. He was assessed on £40 of goods in St Petrock in 1544 and was a churchwarden in that parish in 1545/6.

<sup>1225</sup> My thanks are due to Peter Maunder for supplying these references from them. He analyses these with particular reference to Tiverton in Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, pp.32-36. The fines are discussed in M. Zell, 'The Exchequer Lists of Provincial Clothmakers Fined in London during the Sixteenth Century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 54, 1981, pp.129-130. The fines were levied from the reign of Edward VI up to the 1580s and are a source which may yield more information through future study though Zell notes that they are very time-consuming to work through.

<sup>1226</sup> They were: John Crosse weaver, William Denny occupation unknown, Henry Harris tailor, Thomas Hawes tailor, Ambrose Hoyle tucker, John Periam merchant, William Silvester weaver, Thomas Smithe tailor, Richard Taylor tucker and later clothier, and Anthony Thomas draper.

<sup>1227</sup> Hot pressing was used to make the cloth appear to be of better quality: Maunder, *Tiverton Cloth*, p.31.



The Exeter men involved in the cloth trade in London were by no means all merchants. It seems unlikely that they were factors such as those the Tiverton clothiers employed there.<sup>1228</sup> Only one, John Periam, was a merchant and he had moved from Exeter to London. He was involved in several disputes with the Twenty Four and was expelled from, and then re-instated into, the city council, returning to be mayor in Exeter in 1563 and 1572.<sup>1229</sup> The occupations of some of the other men can be identified and they included three tailors, a draper, a tucker, a tucker who was also described as a clothier and a weaver. Four of them were officials in the tailors' or clothworkers' guilds. Most were not part of Exeter's elite<sup>1230</sup> though Henry Harris was assessed on £50 in St Pancras in 1544.<sup>1231</sup> Some were part of the outer elite.<sup>1232</sup> These activities, in the 1550s, may have contributed to the thrust of the merchants to obtain incorporation as a guild themselves and exclude men from other occupations from as much trading as possible.

### *The Merchants and Industry*

Merchants were involved alongside the artisans in industrial developments in Exeter. They were active in the late fifteenth century, when John Atwyll, merchant and mayor five times between 1476 and 1496, held the farm of a mill on the Exe between 1483 and 1494.<sup>1233</sup> The extent of the merchants' role in Exeter's industries increased by the mid-sixteenth century. There was little difference between the pattern of investment in the west of the city (Exe Island) and in Duryard to the north as merchants and artisans were involved in both areas. Merchants, alongside artisans are recorded as holding the leases of a range of mills: tucking and fulling, edge, grinding and grain.<sup>1234</sup>

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<sup>1228</sup> Ibid. pp. 32-34.

<sup>1229</sup> See 6.2.

<sup>1230</sup> In the lay subsidies some were assessed on goods valued at between £3 and £6,

<sup>1231</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59.

<sup>1232</sup> Harris was more prominent and became a city bailiff. Another served as a warden of Exe Bridge. Two were churchwardens at St Mary Steps and two others had this role at St Petrock and St John.

<sup>1233</sup> DHC, ECA, Duryard Account Rolls, 1/2 Richard III, 9/10 Henry VII.

<sup>1234</sup> DHC, ECA, Duryard Account Rolls, 10 Edward IV-7/8 Eliz. I; Exe Island Account Rolls, 11/12 Edward IV- 11/12 Eliz. I; Miscellaneous Roll 48; AB II ff.88a.,139a, 169a; AB III, ff. 222, 234, 251, 274; AB IV ff. 3, 61, 71; ED/M/1128; ED/M/1131. By the mid-sixteenth century it is possible to detect a resurgence of merchant involvement in the Exeter mills, though it was alongside that of the artisans. The Duryard account rolls show that the mills were leased by merchants and artisans between 1483 and 1539. By 1539 a cooper was involved but this

William Hurst's bequests in his will, made in 1568, reveal the extent of merchant involvement. He held the leases of tucking mills and edge mills (for grinding and crushing commodities such as grain and bark) outside Exeter's West Gate, a dozen parks (wide meadow flat areas) on Exe Island and seven dozen racks in Frierenhay. He is listed amongst the holders of cloth racks in Frierenhay in 1561 and 1566. Some of his property disputes also show his industrial concerns in Devon such as that regarding the ownership of a limekiln at Whiteway in Kingsteignton.<sup>1235</sup> The cloth racks in Frierenhay were held by merchants and tailors in particular in 1550/52, 1561 and 1566.<sup>1236</sup> Thomas Prestwood, as noted below, held a tucking mill and a blowing mill in West Devon, the latter suggesting some involvement with tin-mining. Exeter merchants did not, however, become involved in tin-mining ventures. Greeves, in the most important study of the Devon tin industry, has noted that of 120 Devon tin mine-owners and occupiers between 1500 and 1700 there were no Exeter merchants.<sup>1237</sup> Overall the Exeter merchants were increasingly diversifying their interests into industrial concerns.

### *The Merchants and the Trading Infrastructure*

In a trading community we would expect the merchants to be concerned with the maintenance of trade routes. The Hursts had an interest in the city's highways. John Hurst left 20 marks (£13 6s 8d) for their repair in 1552 and his

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became merchant leasees again in the years from 1541 to 1559. A tailor-draper received some compensation for the lack of water to his mill in 1547. In 1562 and 1569 a goldsmith was the main figure. In the growing industrial area to the west of the city, outside the West Gate, in the late fifteenth and earlier sixteenth century the farm of a mill was held by a merchant, a saddler, some lawyers and a dyer. An edge mill was leased to a cooper. From 1541 to 1559 a grinding or grain mill was leased successively by merchants but by 1562 the leasee was a goldsmith. Men described as fullers, held the fulling mills outside the West Gate in 1500 near Crekylpytt mill. In 1555 merchant involvement is evident when a detailed lease was granted to a merchant, the town clerk and a tailor. In 1569 a merchant held the tucking mills outside the West Gate.

<sup>1235</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/50/8; C1/821/6.

<sup>1236</sup> DHC, ECA, AB II ff.93b, 99a, 107a, 109b; AB III ff. 1-2, 7; TAB I ff.18a, 31b; TNA, C1/1429/61-63; C3/37/33; Prob. 11/33/14. The city Act Books contain some references to men holding the cloth racks in Frierenhay in 1550/52 and two lists exist for 1561 and 1566. Linking with other records reveals that although four of the men were prominent tuckers some of the others were two merchants, two tailors and Alexander Trygges, who was described at various times as a merchant, a draper and a tailor. He was master of the Tailors' guild in 1552 and 1562. It has not been possible to identify the occupations of all the men. In 1566 those holding the racks included Margery Cleveland, the former wife of the tailor Henry Harris.

<sup>1237</sup> T.A.P Greeves, 'The Devon Tin Industry 1450-1750: An Archaeological and Historical Survey', University of Exeter Ph.D., pp.271-276.

father William bequeathed £6 13s 4d for the same purpose in 1568.<sup>1238</sup> Bridges were also a focus for charity. William Crugge in 1520 made provision for the maintenance of the Topsham and Teign bridges.<sup>1239</sup> Other traders such Thomas Hunt, a tailor who developed a business as a draper and so was more concerned with distribution, left £1 in 1548 for the repair of Cowley bridge on the Credition road north of Exeter.<sup>1240</sup> From 1550 money was being bequeathed in wills to the proposed Exeter canal. Henry Hamlyn in 1550 bequeathed lands 'if they do bring upp the haven to the city of Exeter'. As late as 1560 the bequests were still very tentative about the success of the venture' with John Buller , bequeathing £10 in 1560, stating 'If it shall happen that the new haven late begun to be brought up to the city walls...within the space of ten years of my death...' .<sup>1241</sup>

### *Merchant Property and Capital*

Merchants became property-owners. Prosperous ones such as John Hooker rented out large numbers of properties in Exeter (in his case 14) in the late fifteenth century, as is evident from the Tenth of 1489 and shown in Appendix 24.<sup>1242</sup> However, the dissolution of religious houses did not spark off any wide scale property speculation by the Exeter citizenry. Youings has described their share as 'a very meagre and belated reward' for their support to the Tudors.<sup>1243</sup> All but two of the individual Exeter-based beneficiaries identified by Youings were merchants and members of the city council but none made such substantial gains as the local gentry and aristocracy.<sup>1244</sup> The largest merchant purchaser noted was Maurice Levermore, who invested the large sum of £319 in the former monastic owned properties sold in the city between 1549 and 1552. Other prominent merchant families such as the Paramores, Hursts, Prestwoods and Periams were significant investors. The major merchant families were diversifying their wealth.

<sup>1238</sup> TNA, Prob.11/36/3; 11/50/8.

<sup>1239</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/197/26.

<sup>1240</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/32/11.

<sup>1241</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/43/56, 11/33/14.

<sup>1242</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.2, 3, 4.

<sup>1243</sup> J. Youings, 'The City of Exeter and the Property of the Dissolved Monasteries', *TDA*, 84, 1952, pp.122-141.

<sup>1244</sup> The exceptions were the draper Griffin Ameredith who acquired three messuages and a pound house adjoining St John's Hospital and, briefly, the Bear Inn and Nicholas Reve, a brewer, who had bought an individual freehold in South Street by 1555.

The fluid state of the mid-sixteenth century land market did fulfil the aspirations of some Exeter merchants. A good deal of information survives concerning the property of Thomas Prestwood, who died at the apex of his career as mayor in 1576. He left a rental of his property which covers the period from Christmas quarter 1573 to Michaelmas quarter 1574.<sup>1245</sup> An abstract of the rental is presented in Appendix 35. Prestwood's holdings in Exeter were spread through 11 parishes. Much of it was concentrated in the parish of All Hallows Goldsmith Street where he rented out 13 tenements, 6 gardens, 4 stables, a house, a room in a house, a linhay and a curtilage. There was also a sizeable amount of property in St Edmund, the developing industrial area to the west of the city. He held three manors: Butterford (east of Plymouth), Vennytedburn (in the parish of Crediton) and Tynnacre (in the Tamar valley near Holsworthy). Prestwood also owned a tucking mill at Ivybridge and a blowing mill at Harford near Ivybridge. Most of his country property was in West Devon. His lands were worth over £55 per annum and, with his Exeter property, which was worth over £86 per annum, his total rental income in 1573/74 exceeded £141. Prestwood lived a dual life as a country gentleman and as a member of the urban elite in Exeter. Property had replaced trading as a major source of Prestwood's wealth.<sup>1246</sup> Property was a key source of further investments for merchant businesses throughout the period.

The Exeter wills contain a good deal of information concerning the amount of capital which was in the hands of the will-makers. Calculations can only be approximate as no Exonian was likely to have bequeathed all of his cash in his will and many wills contain unspecified residues of perhaps a third of the testator's goods. Most of the Exeter wills contain cash bequests. There is no doubt, even allowing for inflation, that the merchant of Elizabethan Exeter was considerably richer than his fifteenth century equivalent. Between 1559 and 1590 the mean cash bequest was £207 compared with £94 between 1521 and 1558 and £37 from 1470 to 1520. The mean total for the whole period was £129. Of the known testators who bequeathed over £300 in cash in their wills most were merchants and only one made his will before 1550. Some testators

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<sup>1245</sup> Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, 72/279A.

<sup>1246</sup> He married Mary, the daughter of William Strode of Newingham (Newnham near Plymouth) and resided at his 'mansion house' at Butterford. He retained his residence in the High Street in Exeter. A conjectural plan of this was drawn up by Hoskins based on an inventory: Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants', p.161; Vivian, *Visitations*, p.615.

had much more cash at their disposal than is evident from their wills. Cash was invested and over 40 extant Exeter wills contain bequests of plate, usually of silver or silver gilt. In 1524 the merchant John Symon bequeathed plate worth £40 to his second wife Agnes.<sup>1247</sup> Plate was a useful repository for superfluous cash and an investment for the prosperity of heirs.

### *The Foundation of Landed Families*

Wills contain a great deal of information about real property. However, not all of the family property was specified in the will. Inquisitions post mortem also list property but they are also problematical. Hoskins drew attention to the marked difference in values assigned to the same properties in the inquisitions drawn up by the courts of Chancery and Exchequer and the feodary surveys made for the Court of Wards, which give an 'improved' or realistic valuation.<sup>1248</sup> The feodary's specific task was to ensure that the Crown received its full revenues in the event of wardship. No feodary surveys are known to be extant for the period with which we are concerned.<sup>1249</sup> We can, however, count the number of manors in a merchant's possession, as recorded in the inquisitions post mortem, which will give us a rough indication of his landed estate. William Hurst possessed six manors at the time of his death in 1568.<sup>1250</sup> Griffin Ameredith, who became much more than a tailor-draper, held three manors at the time of his death in 1558 and the Prestwoods also had three manors.<sup>1251</sup>

Most of Exeter's prospering families were composed of merchants. Wealth amassed in overseas trade was used to try and build up a landed family-holding. The establishing of a landed family has been seen since Thrupp's study of the London merchants as the means by which the merchant launched his family into a new way of life.<sup>1252</sup> The Heralds Visitations record the pedigrees of 17 county families founded by Exeter men in the sixteenth

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<sup>1247</sup> TNA, Prob 11/22/1.

<sup>1248</sup> W.G. Hoskins, 'The Estates of the Caroline Gentry' in W.G. Hoskins and H.P.R. Finberg, ed., *Devonshire Studies*, London, 1952, pp.334, 360.

<sup>1249</sup> TNA, Wards 5/9-10, Devon bundles. For a discussion of the duties of the county feodaries see H.E. Bell, *An Introduction to the History and Records of the Court of Wards and Liveries*, Cambridge, 1953, pp.38-45.

<sup>1250</sup> TNA, C142/150/173, 142/242/106, 107.

<sup>1251</sup> TNA, C142/113/21, 142/120/46, 142/176/27.

<sup>1252</sup> S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, Michigan, 1948, p.282.

century.<sup>1253</sup> The rate of failure amongst urban dynasties was very high and more county families were founded in Devon in the early Stuart era. The merchant's life was one of constant aspiration - for recognition in his trade, his parish, his company and his town. He sought renown through the establishing of a stable and prosperous family which would continue as a commemoration of his worldly efforts. As John Hooker remarked in his 'Synopsis Chorographical', the merchants:

for the most parte do dwell in townes and cities and havinge attayned to some welthe they do become greate adventures and travellers by seas in to all nations and countries from whense any proffite or gayne is to be had and thereby they do attayne to greate welthe and riches which for the most parte they do imply in purchasinge of lande and by little and little they do creepe and seeke to be gentlemen.<sup>1254</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Exeter merchants were heading developing businesses though nearly all were retailers, often dealing in a wide range of goods and not 'mere merchants'. It has been shown that the term 'merchant', in practice, was a complex one. By the later 1520s and more decisively, by the 1540s the Exeter merchants took over more control of the trade in the port. They were able to assert even greater control by the 1550s and 1560s. The role of individual Exeter merchants, the decline in the fortunes of other towns and the fall in competition from the Exeter tailors all contributed to this change. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the leading Exeter traders were playing a significant role in the coastal trade but real change took place by the 1560s as they expanded their involvement. The Exeter traders worked mainly through their home port but outside this they were most often trading through Dartmouth. Exeter merchants were less present in other ports, even in Devon. The Dorset ones were becoming more important connections by the mid-sixteenth century. The Exeter

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<sup>1253</sup> Vivian, *Visitations*. MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 259-261 discusses the formation of landed estates and provides some detail on the Amerediths, Periams, Hursts, Peters and Smiths citing the Periams as the most spectacular success by the later Elizabethan period.

<sup>1254</sup> B.L., Harleian MS 5827 f.5b; DHC, MS 11 f.20.

merchants were also diversifying their economic interests. It has been argued here that they were more involved in ship-owning than has previously been supposed. Although it has been concluded that most Exeter merchants were engaged in cloth-retailing, as well as some probably being wholesalers, men from other occupations participated, especially tailors. The Exeter men selling cloth in London were by no means all merchants. Exeter merchants were investing more in industrial enterprises both to the north and the west of the city. Their diversification of interests also included urban property holdings and the purchasing of rural manors, the latter especially being part of their thrust towards gentry status. It has been shown that the Exeter men were forming wider trading partnerships by the late 1550s and they also sought to extend these and their economic position within the trade and the city by forming their own Merchants' Company. This move will be explored in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6: THE EXETER MERCHANTS' COMPANY 1558-1570

### *Introduction, Sources and Historiography*

This chapter demonstrates that the merchants were able to establish a successful company of their own in Exeter in the 1560s whose membership was largely composed of the city's elite. However, it argues that the Merchants' Company was not a strong and secure organisation in this decade and that it was beginning to establish the power which was to see it dominate Exeter in the later Tudor years. The company played a vital part in widening the economic, social and political divide that was emerging between merchants and artisans.

The city guilds were alarmed in the first year of Elizabeth's reign when the merchants obtained a charter of incorporation from the Queen as the 'Company of the Merchant Adventurers Trading with France'.<sup>1255</sup> The French trade made up by far the largest proportion of that handled by the port of Exeter in this period. In the years from 1565 to 1570 it accounted for a mean of 80% of imports and 73% of exports.<sup>1256</sup> The merchants became a company recognised by the city in 1558 and, after a prolonged dispute, gained their first charter from the Crown in January 1559 and a new and revised one in June 1560. It is really from the latter date that the Company began to function effectively.<sup>1257</sup>

This chapter examines Company activities as a whole, especially between 1558 and 1570, to ascertain the role it played in the tightening of merchant control within the city. It examines the extent to which the Exeter Company succeeded in excluding non-members or artisans from overseas trade before 1570 and how far it was able to exercise a monopoly of the French trade. It considers why a merchant company was founded in Exeter, who formed it and what its main concerns were in the earlier years. Analysis of its membership shows its links to the city council and challenges to this from within the Company. The Merchants'

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<sup>1255</sup> MacCaffrey dates the first charter as January 1559: *Exeter*, p.137. Cotton includes a transcript of the second, and effective, charter from June 1560: *Elizabethan Guild*, pp.1-10.

<sup>1256</sup> The figure is based on a mean of three years calculated from the Port Books, which give destinations and ports of embarkation for ships. TNA, E190/925/6, 926/1, 927/7.

<sup>1257</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.136-148.



Company in Exeter is viewed within the context of other merchant companies operating at this time in Bristol, Chester and York.

The chapter argues that the established elite of Exeter merchants formed the company but that a new and distinct group took charge a few years later. It shows that in its first decades the Company was establishing itself and was not the confident organisation which it was to become in the 1580s and 1590s. Despite its limitations the Company, consolidated a social and economic divide between the merchants and the artisans which was to widen over time.

Records of the Exeter Company survive only for the period up to 1603.<sup>1258</sup> Much of our knowledge derives from the survival of their 'court book' which covers the years from its inception up to 1601.<sup>1259</sup> Substantial extracts covering the whole period were published by William Cotton in 1873.<sup>1260</sup> The other major records which survive for the Company are papers concerning the dispute surrounding its foundation: copies of interrogations, examinations, narratives, assertions, answers and supplications from the time as well as a number of copies of the charter.<sup>1261</sup> These were the main sources used by MacCaffrey in his discussion of the founding of the Company.<sup>1262</sup> Cotton's account provides extracts and comment covering more than four decades but does not provide insights into the changing nature of the Company. Stephens, despite the lack of Company records, used a range of sources to examine the policy of the Company and its officials in the early seventeenth century.<sup>1263</sup>

## 6.1 The Antecedents of a Merchants' Company in Exeter

A merchant guild had existed in Exeter in the twelfth century but by the early thirteenth century its functions were taken over by the civic institutions, headed

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<sup>1258</sup> Ibid., p.152 n.52.

<sup>1259</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11.

<sup>1260</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.vi notes that they were discovered within the collection of the Weavers, Tuckers and Shearmen.

<sup>1261</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185. (Merchants' Company Papers).

<sup>1262</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 136-159.

<sup>1263</sup> He was able to establish a list of Company governors and treasurers between 1605 and 1649 from the Tuckfield's Charity records: W.B. Stephens, 'Merchant Companies and Commercial Policy in Exeter 1625-1688', *TDA*, 86, 1954, pp.137-160; id., 'The Officials of the French Company in Exeter in the Early Seventeenth Century', *DCNQ*, 28, 1957, pp.111-113.

by the newly-established mayoralty. The members of the freedom of the city were the group who then exercised control of the trade.<sup>1264</sup> The number of city freedom holders was low in Exeter compared to many other leading towns and so this may have functioned successfully. However, it has been calculated that there were about 375 members of the freedom by the mid-sixteenth century.

<sup>1265</sup> It was undoubtedly increasing in size, so this may have led to pressures to create a more exclusive merchant-dominated organisation exercising more specific trading monopolies.

From the mid-1480s up until certainly 1535 the fraternity of St George was maintained at the Guildhall and used the chapel which had been built there in 1484/85.<sup>1266</sup> An ordinance of 1532 confirmed that all members of the Twenty Four were to be brothers of the fraternity.<sup>1267</sup> The chaplain of St George was also the mayor's chaplain and additionally served the chantry chapel on Exe Bridge.<sup>1268</sup>

The fraternity was probably the most exclusive organisation of merchants before the Merchants' Company was formed and the majority of its members would have been merchants. However, with the coming of the Reformation and, as merchant domination of the Twenty Four became increasingly pronounced, the city's elite turned towards formation of its own Merchants' Company.

Before the foundation of the Company a few Exeter men: the Colshills, Thomas Andrew and John Periam were members of the London companies.<sup>1269</sup> Exeter traders were not members of the companies based in Spain: the Brotherhood of St George founded in San Lucar de Barrameda in 1517, and the Andalusian

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<sup>1264</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p.95.

<sup>1265</sup> See 3.1.

<sup>1266</sup> See 2.1. Also Lloyd Parry, *History*, pp.21-29.

<sup>1267</sup> DHC, ECA, AB I f.32a.

<sup>1268</sup> Lloyd Parry, *History*, p. 25. The ornaments of the Guildhall chapel were sold off with the dissolution of the chantries in 1547. After this date a salary was paid to a mayor's chaplain. One was being maintained in 1567 when, at the time of a new appointment, some civic duties were incorporated into the benefice of St Edmund.

<sup>1269</sup> For the Colshills see also A. Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People 1130-1578*, Aldershot, 2005, pp.223, 223n, 298, 467. For Thomas Andrew see 4.3. For John Periam see DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.357a.

Company founded in 1530.<sup>1270</sup> They were not usually of sufficient standing to become key figures in national merchant companies. This was also true of the merchants of the other provincial towns such as York, where few of them were, despite their wealth and social dominance within the town.<sup>1271</sup>

The Exeter merchants had been working more collectively on matters such as the beginnings of the Exeter Canal project from the late 1530s.<sup>1272</sup> They became a Company recognised by the city in 1558 and, began to function effectively in June 1560.<sup>1273</sup> The election for the Company's first officials was held in the chapel chamber of the Guildhall and a meeting took place there in August 1560.<sup>1274</sup>

## **6.2 The Dispute about the Creation of a Merchants' Company in Exeter**

The history of the dispute about the foundation of the Exeter Merchants' Company has been related by MacCaffrey.<sup>1275</sup> The opposition was led by the tailors who were frequently referred to by the merchants as a seditious group. They received support from the guilds of the weavers and tuckers, the cordwainers, the bakers, and from groups of cappers, brewers and dyers, who may not have had formal guilds at this time.<sup>1276</sup> The major reason for this serious dispute, which lasted for eighteen months, was the attempt by the merchants in the first charter of January 1559 to exclude all Exeter citizens who were not members of the new Company from wholesale and retail in any imported goods and from the export trade. This would have had a serious economic effect on the city's artisans and retailers. It was also fuelled by the council's ruling two years previously in favour of the cordwainers against the tailors in a demarcation dispute concerning the making of jerkins. Further, the merchants resented the incursions, of tailors in particular among the artisan groups, into overseas trading. The tailors were presented as an occupation grasping to become drapers and grocers as well as merchants. Much stress

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<sup>1270</sup> Connell Smith, *Forerunners of Drake*, pp.81-99.

<sup>1271</sup> Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.160.

<sup>1272</sup> See 5.2 and also MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.127-128.

<sup>1273</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-148.

<sup>1274</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 ff.7b.

<sup>1275</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 136-159.

<sup>1276</sup> See 3.2.

was placed by the merchants on the maintenance of social order and similar debates concerning the role of the mercantile and the artisan groups were present in other provincial towns at this time, as Sacks has identified.<sup>1277</sup> Copies of the merchants' charter, together with bills and supplications against it, circulated amongst the city craftsmen and others such as the tenants of the Bishop's Fee, the parishioners of St Sidwell's and those living outside the West Gate.<sup>1278</sup> The dispute caused internal struggles within the craft guilds.<sup>1279</sup> By June 1560 the merchants had gained their victory. The battle was fought through a series of petitions, supplications, replications, depositions and letters sent to the Privy Council by both parties in the dispute.

Three representatives of the artisans appeared before a Privy Council Committee in London, namely: Richard Helyer, (Hilliard), a goldsmith and Thomas Hawes, and Thomas Byrd, both tailors.<sup>1280</sup> Another leader was the tailor John Webbe.<sup>1281</sup> All of the tailors and weavers presented as ringleaders of the opposition were officials of their guilds and so this was a serious challenge by leading members of Exeter's artisan group.<sup>1282</sup> However, resistance crumbled when Helyer, Hawes and Byrd were bound over for the sum of £20 each to appear before the Privy Council and final efforts to resist the second charter dissipated in the early months of 1560. Ultimately, the merchant group

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<sup>1277</sup> Sacks, *Widening Gate*, pp.95-99.

<sup>1278</sup> The documents are all contained in DHC, ECA, Book 185.

<sup>1279</sup> Such as when Simon Jane, the master of the weavers and tuckers in 1558, protested that he had not appointed Richard Maunsell as his deputy to collect signatures for a bill of petition. Maunsell was aided by Henry Toner, the clerk of the Tailors' guild, who may have acted in that capacity for the clothworkers. Ambrose Howell, who was to succeed Simon Jane as master of the weavers and tuckers, also played an important role in drumming up support in Exe Island. DHC ECA Book 185 especially no.10, but also no.6, and no.22.

<sup>1280</sup> Helyer had been a city bailiff a few years earlier and Byrd was the master warden of the Tailors' guild in 1559.

<sup>1281</sup> He brought a letter from London concerning the postponement of the first charter in May 1559 and presented it to the mayor in Exeter. He had served as master warden of the Tailors' guild.

<sup>1282</sup> Richard Helyer (Hilliard) had entered the freedom in 1546 as an apprentice to John Wall, an Exeter goldsmith. He lived in St George and had been a city bailiff a few years before the dispute so was on the edge of the elite. Flavin notes that he played a prominent civic role. He was the father of the miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard. He was to become a member of the city council and served as sheriff. A miniature of him, dated by Flavin at 1577, survives in the Victoria and Albert Museum: Flavin, 'Decorative Arts', pp.36-37. Thomas Hawes was a tailor in St Mary Major. He was literate as he signed the interrogation. Thomas Byrd was an Exeter tailor (see Appendix 20). John Webb had entered the freedom in 1552 and lived in St Stephen. In 1557 he was master warden of the Tailors' guild. He was to go on to become its warden for the first of three times in 1560. He was a city bailiff in 1565.

offered the Crown the stability in the governing of Exeter which it sought. In August 1560 the first regular elections of the Merchants' Company were held with powerful William Hurst being elected governor.<sup>1283</sup> He replaced John Peter who had been named as the first governor under the first Company charter.<sup>1284</sup> The costs of the merchants in obtaining the charter were high.<sup>1285</sup>

In 1560 a small group of 'Hedde Commoners' were recorded at the Company meeting. This suggests that they may have had a representative role. Eight men are listed of whom three were bakers and there was also a barber and a butcher. They had all been freemen since the 1530s or 40s, so were established city craftsmen.<sup>1286</sup> The notion of a representative group had emerged during the disputes when John Hooker, in his oration to the freemen had suggested that artisan eligibility for membership of the new Merchants' Company might be decided by the mayor, the Chamber and ten principal commoners.<sup>1287</sup> The creation and use of such a group was perhaps an attempt to placate the opposition of the artisans to the new company. Equally it may have been that their work was completed by 1560, as they were intended to arbitrate over the initial admissions to the Company, to prevent the unfair exclusion of artisans. No further reference to such a group has been found in the records before 1570.

### **6.3 The Structure, Officials and Membership of the Company**

The Company was directed by an annually elected governor with four consuls, two being more senior. In the early years they were distinguished as first and second or elder and junior consuls. The use of the terms 'Governor' and 'Consul' suggests that the merchants were trying to distinguish their organisation. The Exeter craft guilds, and also the merchant companies in other towns, termed their officials as 'Masters' and 'Wardens'. The influence of London is clear in 1560 when the court book notes that the Company would put

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<sup>1283</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 ff. 7b-8a; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.148.

<sup>1284</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.42.

<sup>1285</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f. 9b. An indication is that Gilbert Saywell, one of the first Company consuls, was later paid £5 6s 8d for three journeys to London 'when the charter was first sued' including a payment to cover the cost of a gelding.

<sup>1286</sup> *Ibid.*, f.7b; *Exeter Freemen*, pp. 73, 74, 75, 77, 80, 85, 86, 90.

<sup>1287</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.144.

into effect the capital's proclamation concerning the behaviour of citizens and apprentices.<sup>1288</sup> There are also in many of the entries a group of 16 assistants and a member who was annually elected as the Company's treasurer. Men were only called upon to be governor once but there were exceptional cases such as when the governor died in office. Provision had to be made for the disruption that office-holding caused in merchants' business activities.<sup>1289</sup> Company members were all to be resident within the city of Exeter and were to be freemen of the city within one month of admission.<sup>1290</sup> These regulations were in line with the usual requirements of the craft guilds. The Exeter Company had no ambition to bring in non-Exeter men to try to gain total control of the business of the port. This may reflect their realistic assessment of the limits of their powers as a company at this time. A monopoly of the resident Exeter Company members in trading with France was thus established. In accordance with the provisions of the second charter any 'artificer' who traded could become a member of the society within three years of its inception, though he was to abandon all of his work as an artisan. After three years had elapsed from 1560 a former artisan could still become a member if he paid a fine or he could claim admission by patrimony or apprenticeship. The Exeter Company acknowledged that they were following the practice of the Merchant Adventurers trading to the Low Countries and Flanders, further recognising London influence.<sup>1291</sup>

Meetings were held roughly quarterly in the first decade, initially in the chapel chamber of the Guildhall. Soon a separate meeting hall was used. Its location has not been identified, though it was near to the Guildhall.<sup>1292</sup> It was stipulated that the merchants could be fined for buying and selling in the city during the times of the meetings, except in their shops, suggesting that many of them had retail shops and could have their representatives in them during court times.<sup>1293</sup> The charter granted the Company the right to hold property to the value of 100

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<sup>1288</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.9a.

<sup>1289</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11. Some degree of flexibility was shown as in 1565 when Simon Knight, then governor, travelled to Flanders leaving Maurice Levermore as his deputy. Levermore was not a Company official in that year but had been governor three years previously.

<sup>1290</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.6.

<sup>1291</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-10, 14-18.

<sup>1292</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.149; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, pp. 32-33. In 1579 John Sampforde was paying £4 in rent for a hall and a little house adjoining it.

<sup>1293</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.9a.

marks per annum but no details survive of their property holdings before 1570 and none before 1601 were recorded by Cotton. There is little evidence in merchants' wills of bequests being made to the Company. Margaret Drake, the only woman member in the period studied, did leave a legacy and the records note that 40 shillings was brought to the meeting by her son, Nicholas Martin.<sup>1294</sup> The charter had stipulated that the eldest son of a freemen or freewoman of the society could become members if they were working as merchants.<sup>1295</sup> The inclusion of the term 'freewoman' is very unusual within the Exeter records of this time. It may have been included to protect Margaret Drake and her children.

From its inception the Company employed a clerk. In its first few years this function was performed by Henry Redyng, a scrivener, who had been admitted to the city freedom in 1547. In 1555 Redyng held some responsibility for the New Inn in Exeter where cloth, linen, wool and other merchandise was sold. Redyng had been a prominent figure before the Company was formed.<sup>1296</sup> In October 1564 the role was taken over by John Field. He received a fee of 13s 4d per annum plus 2s 6d for the writing of every charter party and apprenticeship indenture and 6d for writing every obligation. In the same year Field became a freeman of the city paying a £1 fine. He held the post of clerk up until his death in late 1585 or 1586. Field is noted as the writer of the court book. He was listed as a full member of the Company in 1570.<sup>1297</sup> A beadle was also appointed from at least 1563.<sup>1298</sup>

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<sup>1294</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11; TNA, Prob. 11/52/10. By the late 1570s and early 1580s a few members were leaving legacies such as Thomas Prestwood, who left 40 shillings to the company of Merchant Adventurers (of Exeter) and £40 to the Merchant Adventurers (of London) (made in 1576, Prob. 11/59/9) and Eustace Oliver, who in 1581 left 20 shillings to be distributed by the treasurer and consuls of the company to the poor of Exeter and 6d to each of the twelve poor men of the Company (neither therefore directly for the benefit of the Merchants' Company) (made in 1581, Prob. 11/63/29).

<sup>1295</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.16.

<sup>1296</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, p.76; DHC, ECA, AB II ff.138b, Book 185 no.17; TNA, C1/1463/23. MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.37 notes that the New Inn was leased from the Dean and Chapter in 1555. Redyng had an influential supporter in Sir John St. Ledger (of Annery in Monkleigh, North Devon). He was in dispute with some of the merchants and John Peter was granted permission by the city council to bring an action of slander against him in March, 1558.

<sup>1297</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11f. 18a, 29a, 33b, 113b, 138a, 146a; Exeter St Petrock CW1; *Exeter Freeman*, p.86; *Tudor Exeter*, p.64; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.125. Field had purchased one of the Queen's 'lottos' in 1568. He was churchwarden in the merchant dominated St Petrock in 1567/68 and 1568/69 and was living in St Petrock in 1577. Field was present at election day in August 1585 but in September 1586 his widow, Julian, requested 12s 10d from the Company

An analysis of Company officials from its inception up to 1570 shows that the first five governors were all leading Exeter merchants who had also served as city mayor before taking up office. Leading traders such as John Peter, William Hurst and the Midwinter brothers were all at the forefront of the foundation of the Company. A change became apparent, however, by 1565 after which less prominent figures were far more discernible. Men served as governor from then who had not been mayor before becoming governor and two of them had served previously only as a city bailiff. They were mostly prominent merchants though William Tryvett (governor in 1570) was an apothecary and Thomas Richardson (1568) was a vintner and merchant. The same widening of participation in Company office holding is also true of the consuls. The tables below show that overwhelmingly in the first years of the Company officials had served as city bailiffs before they were elected to office. They were, therefore, members of the outer ring of the government of the city. More significantly the majority of the officials were members of the Twenty Four before being elected to Company office (See Table 6.1). This demonstrates how closely the Company was controlled by the city council. Overall it became less common for the key Company officials to have held the top civic positions of mayor or receiver. By the mid 1560s the grip of the 'old guard' of the founders of the company may have been lessening as the prominent men died. The Exeter burial registers show that William Hurst, John Midwinter and Peter Lake died in the years from 1565 to 1570.<sup>1299</sup> William Bucknam also made his will in 1563.<sup>1300</sup>

**TABLE 6.1 MERCHANTS' COMPANY: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPANY OFFICE AND CIVIC OFFICE 1560-1570**

**BAILIFFSHIP BEFORE BECOMING COMPANY CONSUL OR GOVERNOR**

BEFORE	29
AFTER	5
SAME YEAR	4
NEVER BAILIFF	4

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for unpaid fees, which were granted. In August 1588 she was granted a further 20s by the Company to discharge all actions and demands made by her.

<sup>1298</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 185, no. 17; 58/7/11 ff. 16a, 18a, 113b, 138a, 146a. The beadle's role involved summoning offenders and maintaining the order of the Company.

<sup>1299</sup> DHC, Exeter St Petrock PR1, Exeter St Kerrian PR1.

<sup>1300</sup> TNA, Prob 11/46/42.



**MEMBER OF CITY COUNCIL (TWENTY FOUR) BEFORE BECOMING COMPANY CONSUL OR GOVERNOR**

BEFORE	16
AFTER	14
SAME YEAR	2
NEVER COUNCIL MEMBER	10

**CITY RECEIVERSHIP BEFORE BECOMING COMPANY CONSUL OR GOVERNOR**

BEFORE	7
AFTER	10
SAME YEAR	0
NEVER RECEIVER	25

**FIRST MAYORALTY BEFORE BECOMING COMPANY CONSUL OR GOVERNOR**

BEFORE	5
AFTER	10
SAME YEAR	0
NEVER MAYOR	27

(Source: DHC, ECA, 58/7/11)

The Merchants' Company was not a large one. In 1565 it had 65 members and by 1570 this had risen to 75.<sup>1301</sup> This had not changed appreciably by the 1590s as in 1596 71 members of the Company were listed in a subscription list for the purchase of corn. However, Cotton notes that towards the end of the sixteenth century, when the occupation was becoming more lucrative and appealing, there was a great accession of members with as many as ten being admitted at one court.<sup>1302</sup> This is confirmed by Youngs' comments on the increasing size of the Elizabethan merchant group in Exeter based on the freeman records.<sup>1303</sup>

Membership was relatively exclusive but not strictly confined to merchants. In its first decade its members included the apothecaries Thomas Lambert, William Trevett and William Erell; the physician Ambrose Torres and the bookbinder and stationer Henry Roberts. These men may have become members to ensure their medical supplies and stocks from abroad. Apothecaries and bookbinders/stationers were recorded as importers of goods into Exeter in the earlier part of the sixteenth century but not later. Another member in 1560,

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<sup>1301</sup> Lists of members exist in the court book for 1560 and 1570: DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 ff. 7a, 33b.

<sup>1302</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.94.

<sup>1303</sup> Youngs, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade', p.104.

Richard Lymbere, was a barber.<sup>1304</sup> John Buller is also recorded in the freemen records as a mercer.<sup>1305</sup> Exeter-based artisan traders were still recorded in small numbers in the overseas and coastal customs accounts in the late 1550s and 1560s.<sup>1306</sup> They included two weavers, a tailor, a waxchandler, a skinner, a baker, a cordwainer and a cook. Exeter-based smiths were also bringing in coal in Welsh and Cornish vessels in the 1560s. None of these men became members of the Exeter Merchants' Company.

The Exeter Merchants' Company drew its membership from men with strong Exeter connections. Company membership can be correlated with the city freedom. In 1560 and 1570 the largest number of members entered the freedom by apprenticeship.<sup>1307</sup> This suggests that members of the Company were recruited more from Exeter-born men, or men who had served a substantial apprenticeship in their formative years within the city. Fewer members were directly from outside. This confirms the idea of preponderance of a group within the Company who were closely associated with the families who made up the city's governing elite.

Closer examination of those members who entered the city freedom by apprenticeship allows us to discern any social networks and if any individual master merchants headed possible factions within the Company. Of the members in 1560 five had served an apprenticeship with the merchant William Hurst and four with the mercer William Bucknam. Of the others in 1560 two served with Hurst's son, John Hurst, and two with Thomas Prestwood. In 1570 no less than ten of the Company members had worked as apprentices under the direction of William Hurst. He must have wielded an enormous influence within the Company. A further four had served under John Peter. These two men were at the top of Exeter's trading community. Two other members each

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<sup>1304</sup> The barber is closer to an artisan, rather than a retailer, though barbering was an ambiguous occupation. In 1561 some goods were brought into Exeter for Richard Lymbeare's shop and in May 1562 he imported cards, twine, paper, brushes and imperlings (a type of red or blue cloth) with Thomas Gay, an Exeter mercer.

<sup>1305</sup> *Exeter Freeman*, pp. 77, 78, 83, 86, 90.

<sup>1306</sup> See 3.3.

<sup>1307</sup> Of the members in 1560 we know that 36 entered this by apprenticeship, 19 by paying a fine and 6 by succession. By 1570 there was a similar pattern as 37 members had entered the freedom by apprenticeship, 21 by fine and 9 by succession and for 7 the method of entry is unknown.

had served with the merchant Peter Lake, the mercer William Bucknam and the apothecary William Lambert. An additional 18 had worked for another Exeter based master. The dominance of William Hurst's influence within the Company in its first years can be discerned though other Exonians such as John Peter and William Bucknam must also have wielded some power.

The age-structure of the Company changed in the first decade of its existence as the age profile became younger. If we assume 24 as the usual age for completion of apprenticeships it is possible to reach some conclusions.

Osborne has calculated for Exeter in the years from 1550 to 1610 that the average age at which the freedom was taken up was 25, based on the baptism and freedom dates of 120 Exeter men. Some migrants paying fines were older. However, the age of 24 is relatively close and some men may have been younger if they entered by succession or apprenticeship in some occupations.

1308

**TABLE 6.2 THE AGE STRUCTURE OF THE MERCHANTS' COMPANY 1560-1570**

	1560	1560	1570	1570
AGE	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
65 +	5	7.7	1	1.3
60+	3	4.6	1	1.3
55+	3	4.6	4	5.3
50+	2	3.1	8	10.6
45+	7	10.7	5	6.6
40+	8	12.3	12	16.0
35+	15	23.1	15	20
30+	1	1.5	14	18.7
25+	15	23.1	7	9.3
UNKNOWN	6	9.2	8	10.6
TOTAL	65		75	

(Source: DHC, ECA 58/7/11; *Exeter Freeman*)

Table 6.2 shows that there were more members over 55 in 1560 than in 1570. It is likely that in 1560 there were a few much older members. By 1570 the preponderance of men were in their early 30s, late 30s and early 40s. Given the lowering of the age of Company members we would expect the company to have become less conservative in their attitude to ventures but the Exeter

<sup>1308</sup> Osborne, 'Illuminating the Chorus', pp.74-75.

merchants continued to be mostly unadventurous in their approach to new markets in the 1560s and the 70s.

The Queen's Lottery in 1568 gives us some insights into the Company.<sup>1309</sup> The Exeter Company purchased 96 lots priced at 10 shillings each. The cordwainers' guild joined with the parishioners of St Mary Major to purchase 30 lots between them.<sup>1310</sup> This gives us some indication of the relative financial standing of the merchants in relation to probably Exeter's fourth most significant guild at the time and one of its most populous parishes. The 'lotts' bought by each member were recorded in the court book and this gives us an insight into the Company and its social affiliates. The list is headed by Thomas Richardson, the governor in that year, who bought the most, six, costing £3. The subscribers are not recorded in ascending order according to the number of lots held, but they are headed by 16 men who are termed 'Mr.' and were the senior men. The number of lots taken gives us an indication of the structure of the company as one man bought four lots, five men had three, nine men had two, 37 men had one lot and eight men had half lots, sharing with another man. The size of the single lot-holder group suggests that they were the rank and file of the Company. This comprised about half of its members and so we can see that the Company had a significant group of ordinary members. Margaret Drake bought one lot showing how she was able to participate. Only the apothecary William Tryvett in the upper echelons of three or more lot-holders was a non-merchant. A few of the social affiliates of the Company bought tickets. These were the men who perhaps met socially with the merchants and may have attended some of their functions. They included men such as the city's common clerk Richard Herte.<sup>1311</sup>

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<sup>1309</sup> The proceeds were to be used for improvement of harbours and other public works. Guilds were encouraged to participate, though there was much general suspicion about the scheme, and ultimately only about a twelfth of the total projected revenue was collected.

<sup>1310</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.29; M.M. Rowe and T.J. Falla, 'The Queen's Lottery, 1568', *DCNQ*, 33, 1968, pp.240-243. Rowe and Falla's article provides a transcript of those households which bought them in St Mary Major which gives us an insight into household structure at the time. C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Lotteries and Sweepstakes: An Historical, Legal and Ethical Survey of their Introduction, Suppression and Re-Establishment*, London, 1932, pp.34-63.

<sup>1311</sup> Richard Hert served as town clerk in Exeter from 1538, entering the freedom then paying a fine of £2, so was perhaps a migrant. He lived in St Lawrence and later All Hallows Goldsmith Street. He took on other roles in the city such as the stewardship of St Nicholas Fee and was also its MP. Hert is also recorded as taking up the lease of tucking mills in 1555. MacCaffrey,

## 6.4 The Business of the Company

Table 6.3 shows the nature of the business of the merchants' court from 1560 to 1570. The Merchants' Company was not so concerned with economic regulation in its early years and financial matters took up a good deal of the time as it was trying to establish itself. The largest proportion of its recorded business was concerned with routine matters such as admissions and the election of officials. The Company was, however, concerned, to a relatively large extent from the outset, with finance, debts and insurance.

**TABLE 6.3 THE BUSINESS OF THE EXETER MERCHANTS' COMPANY COURT 1560-1570**

TYPE OF BUSINESS	NUMBER OF INSTANCES	%
<b>ROUTINE MATTERS</b> (admission of members, election of Company officials, payments of clerk and beadle, issue of licenses to sue at law, charges for the use of the seal, re-iteration of London proclamations, absence of governor)	69	23.63
<b>DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS</b> (non-attendance, warnings, ward/imprisonment, unlicensed suing, leaving without permission, lateness)	34	11.64
<b>FINANCIAL MATTERS</b> (Company accounts, unspecified fines, pawning of goods Queen's lottery, Company plate, costs of London case, special payments out, freight payments)	33	11.3
<b>MARINE INSURANCE</b> (average money payments)	32	10.96
<b>ARBITRATION</b> (disputes between members, apprenticeship disputes)	29	9.93
<b>DEBTS TO THE COMPANY</b> (outstanding member debts, levies due)	28	9.59
<b>TRADING REGULATION</b> (unlicensed trading, licences to trade, trading in court times, trading to Iberia, trading with non-members)	23	7.88
<b>CHARITY</b> (poor men's gowns, use of the Company box, monies out of the Company box)	21	7.19
<b>CONDUCT OF TRADE</b> (freighting of ships)	13	4.45
<b>RITUAL</b> (Midsummer watch, payments for the	8	2.74

banquet, bringing home the new governor)		
<b>LEGACIES</b> (gift of Mrs. Drake)	1	0.34

(Source: DHC, ECA 58/7/11)

The court records show that it was keen to collect ‘average money’ from its members, as it went directly to the Company. This was levied at the rate of 1d on every tun of wine or other wares and fardel of white cloth or canvas exported and imported.<sup>1312</sup> They are not a full record of payments of averages at the time as they were noted in the court book only when a payment had not been made. The Company passed an act in July 1566, which it re-enforced in October of the same year, for the more speedy payment of average money involving a fine of the same value as the money outstanding for every default.<sup>1313</sup> MacCaffrey and Cotton both viewed average money as part of the income of the company.<sup>1314</sup> However, average money was a form of maritime insurance relating to damages incurred at sea.<sup>1315</sup> The Company documents provide a rare insight into the operation of this at a provincial level. The organisation of this by the Exeter Merchants’ Company provided a good incentive for involvement for the merchants at a difficult time for traders in the 1560s. Concerns with the collection of average money took up a lot of time at the court as is clearly reflected in Table 6.3 above. In 1562 there are some indications that collectors were appointed, though this was not a Company office. In the later 1560s the Company treasurer collected some of the monies. Later in the century Cotton notes that the rates increased and that it was farmed out.<sup>1316</sup> In 1564 it was noted that Philip Yard had retained his own averages of 14s. This was an unusual occurrence and may indicate that he was paying his dues in a different way to the usual practice. ‘Langes wyffe’ paid 10s in June 1570 ‘for average behind by her late husband deceased’.<sup>1317</sup> The Company did not have to pursue cases of non-payment of average money further at this time, though in 1563

<sup>1312</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.9a. By 1573 a specific collector had been appointed and by 1587 it had been farmed out: Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.29.

<sup>1313</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.20b.

<sup>1314</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, p.149; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>1315</sup> G. Rossi, *Insurance in Elizabethan England: The London Code*, Cambridge, 2016, pp.137-140.

<sup>1316</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.29.

<sup>1317</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 This is one of the very few instances when the payer was not an Exeter-based member of the Company, though it could be a payment made by a widow who had re-married.

Simon Knight was fined 12d for his default. The Exeter merchants devoted a good deal of time to maintaining the average payments effectively. They were involved in offering a system of marine insurance to their members which must have been a real attraction for merchant involvement in the mid- sixteenth century.

There was also a real attempt to maintain Company identity and influence by keeping disputes between its members out of the common courts and arbitrating within the guild. However, economic regulation of trade took up less Company time. The enforcement of its monopoly in trading with France against unlicensed traders was a concern but this lessened as time progressed in terms of the time taken up at the court. The Company was running into financial difficulties by the late 1560s and was taking an extra levy from its members to cope with this. In October 1569 it was decreed at a meeting that because the house was in debt every member was to contribute 16d towards their discharge. The treasurer also ensured that he collected the levy from all the members who were not present at the meeting.<sup>1318</sup> As no ledger books or accounts of Company disbursements survive we have no real knowledge of how the Company spent its money. The company at this time was not the strong organisation that it became in the later years of Elizabeth's reign.

The Company did concern itself a good deal with the more usual regulatory activities of guilds such as resolving disputes between members and the quality of apprenticeships. A few masters found themselves accused before the court of not fulfilling the obligations of an apprentice's indenture. Peter Lake in 1562 was accused of not providing his apprentice, Richard Newman, with the chance to take part in a venture overseas. In accordance with the provisions of the Company charter passing the apprentice on to a new master, Eustace Oliver, was considered but the decision was made that Newman was to return to Lake's service until the end of his term. Matters were further complicated as Lake died before this. Newman did enter the Company in 1567.<sup>1319</sup> Other

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<sup>1318</sup> Ibid., f.33b.

<sup>1319</sup> Ibid., ff.14b-15a, 32a. Richard Newman in 1572 married Mrs Elizabeth Lymett at St Martin's church in the city (DHC, Exeter St Martin PR1). She was probably the widow of Edward Lymet, the Exeter merchant and wine merchant. He entered the freedom in 1567 as Lake's apprentice and was subsequently resident in St Martin. He became a city bailiff and was a member of the Merchants' Company: *Exeter Freeman*, p.88; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.63, 67; DHC,

apprentices were removed from their masters.<sup>1320</sup> The court records reveal that the Company spent much of its time in its meetings dealing with routine business such as the admission of members. The Company was also keenly concerned to establish discipline with its new organisation and deal fully with the non-attendance of members. They also ensured that members were able to keep any judicial costs lower and maintain their reputation. In its early years it was the commercial combination and trade association noted by MacCaffrey but it was not acting much as an advocate of mercantile interests. This was to come in the later decades of the sixteenth century.<sup>1321</sup>

## 6.5 Company Ritual and Charity

Company ritual emphasised the exalted position of the merchants within Exeter society. The governor was to be reverently saluted by the members wherever he was met. The major annual feast was provided by the governor on election day at the end of his year of office. The culmination of the day was the bringing home of both the new governor and the outgoing one. By 1568 the costs of the banquet were being seen as onerous and a decree was introduced stipulating that every member was to pay 6d to the old governor at the election day towards the charges.<sup>1322</sup> Members were to attend the weddings and funerals of their fellows. There are few recorded details of the social activities of the Company.

The Company took part in the city's Midsummer watch, certainly from 1561<sup>1323</sup> The Midsummer watch was a major civic spectacle in London and Chester involving decorative and processional elements in addition to the midsummer civic watch. Very little is known about it in Exeter. Lindenbaum has called the

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ECA, 58/7/11 ff. 29a, 33b. Peter Lake was buried at St Kerrian in June 1565 (DHC, Exeter St Kerrian PR 1). He was living in St Petrock in 1544 but by 1557 was in St Kerrian (*Tudor Exeter* pp. 51, 58). He was involved in a good deal of litigation. He was jailed in 1559 and fined 40 shillings for abusing Richard Prestwood, one of his fellow town councillors (DHC, ECA, Book 51 f. 353a). He was accused by a group of Lucchese merchants of capturing a ship at Rouen along with John and William Hawkins of Plymouth (TNA, C1/1452/35-37).

<sup>1320</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.27b. Such as Alexander Germyn, who was to be returned to his father, Michael, with all the apparel that had been made for him. His master, William Parsons, was to pay debts amounting to over £50 to the apprentice's father. In addition Valentine Toker was to be reimbursed for money he had laid out in Roan (Rouen) for Alexander's learning of the language (presumably French).

<sup>1321</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 155-159.

<sup>1322</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.30a.

<sup>1323</sup> *Ibid.* f. 10b.



Midsummer watch 'a celebration of ceremony and oligarchy'.<sup>1324</sup> It provided the opportunity for an affirmation of the power of the mayor and the guilds within the context of an inspection of the city's surveillance arrangements. By 1569 and 1570 the court was recording more details. They were to take the view and be ready for the preparation of the watch and members involved were listed in columns of two, four or six men headed by either two 'Mr's' or the treasurer and three consuls. A year later they were instructed to have their men, armour and furniture at Lord Bedford's place by 3pm.<sup>1325</sup> Although a few scattered references exist to the participation of other guilds they are not as detailed nor show such organisation. The Exeter Merchants' Company had quickly taken a leading role in civic ritual involving guilds within the city.

The impression has been given by MacCaffrey of a company which dispensed wide ranging charity within the city of Exeter including donations of wood to the poor, and donations to prisoners. The Company supported its own members and dependents who had suffered losses with its 'house money' loans.<sup>1326</sup> However, much of this charitable action only took place from the mid-1580s when the Company was more established. From its inception the company in the 1560 charter had declared its intention to provide gowns for 12 poor persons in the city as well as relieving company members who by 'infortunacie and force of the sea, or by other meanes....' fell into need.<sup>1327</sup> This was the only type of charity which occurs in the court records before 1570. In October 1560 'Mr' Prestwood (both Thomas and Richard were members) and Eustace Oliver were tasked with buying frieze to make twelve gowns for twelve poor men. The arms of the society were to be set upon the sleeve as a mark of the Company's munificence and as a display of its power. At that time nine men were nominated to receive them.<sup>1328</sup> The recipients were from poor occupations

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<sup>1324</sup> S. Lindenbaum, 'Ceremony and Oligarchy: the London Midsummer Watch' in B. Hanawalt and K.L. Reyerson, ed., *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, Minnesota, 1994, p.172. A. Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre: City Drama and Pageantry from Roman Times to 1558*, Cambridge, 2002, pp.50-54 discusses the Midsummer Watch and its origins.

<sup>1325</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.30b; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, pp.118-119.

<sup>1326</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.156-159; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.175. The cases cited by Cotton covering the years from 1585 to 1601 concern losses at sea including by the Rovers (piracy), widows and poverty for unspecified reasons.

<sup>1327</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.10.

<sup>1328</sup> DHC, ECA 58/7/11 f.8b.

or from just outside the city.<sup>1329</sup> In August 1566 Ralph Sandyforth was paid 9 shillings for making twelve gowns.<sup>1330</sup>

## 6.6 The Members Trading and Maintaining the Monopoly of the French Trade

Not all the Company members were involved in overseas trading. The non-trading members were probably leading retailers who wanted to acquire goods for their shops. They would also have gained from their involvement in the elite economic organisation within the city. In total 36 (54%) of the 65 listed members of the Company in 1560 were identified as traders in the Town Custom for 1560/61.<sup>1331</sup> These were, due to the nature of the records, only the importers. Three key members, identified as 'Mr's' in the list, were not trading. The 27 ordinary members not trading included the physician Ambrose Torres, the stationer and bookbinder Henry Roberts, the apothecary William Trevett, and John Hooker alias Vowell, the city chamberlain. The 1560 list includes Margaret Drake as a member and she was trading in that year.

The 1570 membership list is more formalised and takes more account of precedence. There were 75 members. We can identify the number participating in the overseas trade in 1569/70 from the port book for that year.<sup>1332</sup> The governor in 1570, Hurst's grandson, Nicholas Martin, was a major trader. Ten more senior members of the Company and 26 ordinary members were also trading then. In total, 36 (48%) of the members were trading then. Nine men identified as 'Mr' in the list were not trading. A high number of 29 others were not recorded as trading in the port book including Henry Roberts, and Ambrose Torres. The non-traders also included the apothecary William Erell (though he was trading in another year) and the Company clerk John Field. A number of

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<sup>1329</sup> Such as John Martyn, a cobbler and Joyce, a 'wyrrer' (possibly a wiredrawer). John Martyn, cordwainer, entered the city freedom in 1560/61 (*Exeter Freeman*, p.84) and may have fallen on hard times. Men from just outside the city such as John Hooper from St David were recipients: DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.23b.

<sup>1330</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.23b.

<sup>1331</sup> Ibid., f.7a ; DHC, ECA, TC 2/3 Eliz. I.

<sup>1332</sup> Ibid., f.33b; TNA, E190/927/7.

these men were, however, identified as traders in the overseas port book for 1567/68.<sup>1333</sup>

The Merchants' Company did try to enforce its monopoly of the French trade on Exeter men. Considering the high proportion of Exeter's trade which was carried out with France this was a major privilege. However, this privilege was not utilised very effectively in the first decade of its existence. Between 1560 and 1570 the Company's court book reveals that 34 men were indicted for trading without licence as non-members of the Company. Of these 31 were, or became, members of the city freedom. A good proportion (18) had served an apprenticeship within the city and some entered by succession to their father (3). Many of the others (9) were perhaps more substantial migrants to the city as they paid freedom entry fines of between £2 and £4 though there were some exceptions with men paying high entry fees.<sup>1334</sup> Eleven men who were indicted had not joined the Merchants' Company by 1570. They were, therefore, willing to be intransigent about joining the Company which was an indication of the relative weakness of the Company at this stage. Most of the men had served an apprenticeship in the city and so were not recalcitrant migrants. Most of them were, or were to become, prominent citizens except two, John English in 1561 and 'Robert, Mr Paramors' servant'. English was a Lombard.<sup>1335</sup>

The pursuit of maintaining the monopoly involved the Company in some long disputes. That with John Pyll was the most involved of these. In 1562 he refused to pay the fine to the Company but admitted that he had brought five fardels of cloth out of France in that year. Some cloth was confiscated. He appeared in lists of non-Company traders in 1563. The case continued to be heard by the merchants a year later when he was threatened with imprisonment. A further two years later his servant was accused of taking a pack of cloth to Morlaix in a

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<sup>1333</sup> TNA, E190/926/1. This is one of four surviving Exeter overseas port books covering the years from 1565 to 1570 and covered a full calendar year.

<sup>1334</sup> Such as in 1563/4 when Thomas Brewerton paid £20, in 1564 Thomas Maye paid £13 6s 8d and John Pope in 1565 paid £7: *Exeter Freeman*, pp.85, 86, 87.

<sup>1335</sup> *Tudor Exeter*, pp.11, 59; DHC, Exeter, St Mary Steps CW1. English was a Lombard living in All Hallows Goldsmith Street and St Mary Steps. He paid the alien rate but also served as churchwarden in the latter parish in the mid-1550s. There is no reference to a 'Robert' entering the freedom as an apprentice of Henry or William Paramore, the contemporary merchants.

Topsham ship and then returning to Lyme.<sup>1336</sup> One of his apprentices entered the city freedom as a draper and it may be that this was Pyll's occupation. This may account for his resistance to the Company, as overseas trading was a less important part of his business. Pyll's case greatly agitated the Company, perhaps due to expenses incurred in going to London in dealing with what they called 'Pyll's matter'.<sup>1337</sup>

There was also some opposition to the Company's monopoly from within the ranks of Exeter's leading citizens. John Periam was probably the most influential. In 1562 he was accused of bringing in 30 pieces of crest cloth from France on the 'Mary Page' and was ordered to pay a large fine of 20 marks. (£13 6s 8d) Cotton notes that Periam did not join the Company until ten years later but this was in fact his younger son, John, who entered the city freedom in that year and also became a member of the Merchants' Company.<sup>1338</sup> The elder John Periam was a key figure in the city, being one of the three merchants who had loaned money to Lord Russell in 1549 at the time of the Western Rebellion, along with his brother-in-law John Bodley and Thomas Prestwood, also merchants.<sup>1339</sup> He is recorded in the surviving book of native merchants exporting cloth from Exeter in 1558/59 exporting the second largest number of cloths, so he was of high importance in the port.<sup>1340</sup> John Periam played no part

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<sup>1336</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 ff.12a, 12b, 13a, 15b, 20b; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.108. Pyll paid a fine of £2 to take up the city freedom in 1563/4 and so may have been a migrant. He lived in All Hallows Goldsmith Street, becoming a city bailiff in 1569. He bought a 'lotto' in 1568 but is listed towards the bottom of the payers alongside men who were not members of the Company or merchants. He was not a member in 1570. *Exeter Freeman*, p.86; *Tudor Exeter*, pp.62, 69; DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.29a.

<sup>1337</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 ff. 15a, 15b, 16a, 20b; Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.108.

<sup>1338</sup> Cotton, *Elizabethan Guild*, p.2; *Exeter Freeman*, pp.32, 79, 88, 92; Exeter Cathedral Archives, Dean and Chapter Leases 6011/1/1; *Tudor Exeter*, p.49; DHC, ECA, AB II f.139a, 144a. The elder John had become a freeman in 1531/2 by succession to his father, William. He served an apprenticeship to a merchant but it is not known who his master was. By 1534 he had married the daughter of Robert Hone of Ottery St Mary (possibly Ottery's leading trader at the time). He was living in St Olave by 1544, as was his father. He was in Exeter in 1554/1555. His apprentices took up the city freedom in 1552 and 1568. His career in civic office was an interrupted one as he had become receiver in 1552 but did not serve his first mayoralty until 1563.

<sup>1339</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.357a. He was a strong Protestant who became a Protestant exile before 1557 when he was expelled from the city council for not attending any of its meetings for a year and a quarter. He was re-admitted in 1559. He is not included in the modern census of Marian exiles in C.H. Garrett, *The Marian Exiles; A Study in the Origins of Elizabethan Puritanism*, London, 1938; DHC, ECA, AB I f.357, AB II ff. 156b, 167b. Hooker tells us that he became Chief Governor of the Company of the English Merchants in Antwerp.

<sup>1340</sup> TNA, E122/45/12B.

in the formation of the Merchants' Company in Exeter. This could have been a result of the strong personality which Hooker ascribes to him in his mayoral biography, his strong Protestant convictions, his absences from the city, or possibly a more adventurous attitude towards the development of wider trade markets which clashed with the governing hierarchy.

Periam, Bodley and Prestwood did not play a key role in the early years of the Company, even though they were clearly all at the forefront of Exeter's life. Periam was to become mayor in 1563, the year after he was fined by the Company, which may be an indication of the extent of his influence and importance. He died in 1573, in the time of his second mayoralty. His will shows that Periam was forward thinking, by endowing a revolving loan fund of £100 for four young merchants for a period of four years. This was well in advance of these actions by other Exeter merchants which can next be noted in 1589.<sup>1341</sup> In 1572 he left cash legacies in his will which amounted to £2,698, twice the largest cash amount known to have bequeathed by any other merchants as shown in Appendix 15. This again suggests that the operation of his business and his investments were different from many of his contemporaries. The Periams' quarrels with the Exeter Company continued in the next two generations.<sup>1342</sup> The first Periam in particular was at the head of a group of merchants who resisted the Company's monopoly of Exeter's French trade and provided an alternative model of merchant success. He may have wanted a more exclusive company of 'mere merchants'. Periam's horizons were wider than most Exeter merchants as he had strong London connections.

Other prominent trading families defied the Company such as Richard Strobridge, who was fined for trading to France in March 1561. The Strobridges were one of the principal merchant families, resident in Exeter and Colyton, in

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<sup>1341</sup> Periam in his will left £100 for four young men. It was also not a free loan as £5 4 s was to be collected from them and distributed to poor people in the city: TNA, Prob. 11/ 55/37. The next bequest noted was by Thomas Chapell in 1589 when he left £30 for such a purpose: TNA, Prob 11/75/26; Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants', p.185.

<sup>1342</sup> His younger son John joined the company after his father's death though this was the same year in which he took up the city freedom. In 1585 John Periam the younger refused the governorship of the Exeter Merchants' Company stating that now his main residence was in London and also that he needed to be away from Exeter for more than a year. He was elected again in 1587 and did come to the city to take the oath though he was absent at the election. In the same year he was mayor of the city. The Periam spirit was evident in the major sponsorship that John Periam provided for Adrian Gilbert's second voyage of exploration in 1586 and his membership of the Company of North West Discovery.

the mid-sixteenth century and this was probably an act of opposition. The Strobridges do not appear to have played any role in the formation of the Company.<sup>1343</sup> Some men left the city to escape the Company. Richard Selwood was commanded to pay a fine at his next home coming between June and October 1561 and then threatened with imprisonment in the Guildhall. Later in the year it was noted that Selwood had left Exeter to live in Chard and all but 20 shillings of his debt was waived.<sup>1344</sup> Technically Selwood was no longer a city resident and therefore not eligible to be a Company member.<sup>1345</sup> He had served an apprenticeship with John Periam, and further had married Periam's eldest daughter, so this may help to explain his resistance. Richard Selwood was noted later as a trader from Chard in the Exeter customs accounts.

The overseas port books give us some idea of the extent to which a monopoly was not enforced, as shown in the table below.

**TABLE 6.4 THE PROPORTION OF EXETER-BASED IMPORTERS AND EXPORTERS TO AND FROM FRANCE THROUGH THE PORT OF EXETER 1565-1570**

DATE	EXETER BASED EXPORTERS- AS A % OF TOTAL EXPORTERS	EXETER BASED IMPORTERS- AS A % OF TOTAL IMPORTERS
1565 (Easter to Michaelmas)	43%	39%
1567/8	48%	39%
1569/70	56%	44%

(Source: TNA: E190/925/6, 926/1, 927/7)

A comparison of the Exeter traders listed in the port book for 1569/70 with the surviving membership list for that year shows that of 44 Exeter men trading to France in that year 8 (18%) were not members.<sup>1346</sup> Furthermore, a large proportion of the traders in the late 1560s were not Exeter men. The Company

<sup>1343</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.10a. See 5.2 for the prominent role which the Strobridges played in importing the highly-valued cargoes of woad. Hoskins, *Devon*, p. 109.

<sup>1344</sup> DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.11a-12a.

<sup>1345</sup> Ibid., f.7a; *Tudor Exeter*, p.56; *Exeter Freeman*, p. 79. Selwood is listed as a Company member in 1560 and was resident in St Olave in 1557, having entered the city freedom in 1552.

<sup>1346</sup> TNA, E122/927/7; DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 f.33b. The non-members trading to France were John Wykes, John Periam, John Samforde, John Pill, Henry Manninge, Richard Strobridge, Thomas Webber and John Applyn.

did not attempt to exclude traders from other towns as this was not part of the privilege that they were granted by the 1560 charter. Exeter men made far more shipments per year through the port. However, in 1565, men from 16 other places were designated as exporters and from 20 places as importers. Groups of four or five Cullompton, Totnes and Lyme men were of the most significance. By 1569/70, men from 11 other places were recorded exporting goods to French ports and 20 other places as importers. Significant groups are recorded from Cullompton, Tiverton and Kenton. Exeter men made more shipments in and out of the port but they were working alongside merchants from a wide range of other places in operating through the port, even at the end of the period. The Exeter Company was not effective in monopolising the trade with France.

### **6.7 The Company's Joint-Stock Venture of 1566**

By the mid-1560s more formal joint-stock venturing to Spanish and Portuguese ports was being undertaken by the Company, which may also reflect the spreading of risk in a less stable economic situation. It provided an additional advantage of Company membership for the traders. This was an appropriate venture for a Company facing some financial uncertainties and for men trying to minimise risks outside their main markets in France. Only the small amount of profitable trading with the Low Countries provided any other substantial investments for the Exeter merchants.<sup>1347</sup> The details of the joint-stock attempt also provide further insights into the Company itself.

**TABLE 6.5 MERCHANTS PARTICIPATING IN THE COMPANY VENTURES TO SPAIN AND PORTUGAL IN 1566**

NAME OF MERCHANT	TONS FREIGHTED	NUMBER OF SHIPS USED
WILLIAM HURST	43	5
SIMON KNIGHT	35	5
EUSTACE OLIVER	20	3

<sup>1347</sup> Trade with the Low Counties had been a small but regular feature recorded in the port of Exeter's business throughout the period studied and remained of significance at the end of it. In 1567/68 eight ships brought goods into Exeter from Flanders and five left with goods: TNA, 190/926/10. Simon Knight was travelling to Flanders in 1565 when he was governor of the Company DHC, ECA, 58/7/11. The customs accounts provide evidence that William Hurst in particular played a prominent role in the Low Countries trade.

JOHN POPE	18	4
PHILIP YARD	16	4
JOHN PETER	14	5
WILLIAM PERRY	11	5
RICHARD MAWDYT	11	4
THOMAS MARTIN	10	3
ROBERT COTTON	9	4
JOHN HUTCHINS	8	5
EDWARD LYMET	8	3
HENRY ELLACOTT	8	3
JOHN LEVERMORE	7	3
GEORGE PERRYMAN	7	3
WILLIAM CHAPELL	7	3
JOHN BARSTABLE	7	3
ROBERT MIDWINTER	6	3
ROBERT LAMBELL	5	3
JOHN TROSSE	5	2
MAURICE LEVERMORE	4	2
RICHARD BEVYS	4	2
HENRY PARRAMORE	4	2
JOHN MIDWINTER	4	1
RICHARD SWEET	3	2
ANDREW JERE	2	2
RICHARD CARWYTHEN (OWNER AND MASTER)	2	1

(Source: DHC, ECA, 58/7/11 ff.22-24)

In 1566 the Exeter Merchants' Company arranged a joint-stock venture hiring five ships to sail to Malaga, the Algarve and Gibraltar for cargoes of wine, raisins and figs. This venture no doubt built upon the existing trading partnerships which are well documented in the customs accounts and are discussed elsewhere.<sup>1348</sup> This may not have been the only joint venture as in 1566 the company had passed a regulation prohibiting its members from trading to Spain with any trader who was not a member of the company. Spreading the risks involved was perhaps important at a time when the new company was levying extra finance from its members. It was also a time of uncertainty with

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<sup>1348</sup> See 5.1.



trade embargoes and impending war. The years from 1563-64 and 1568-73 were identified by Palliser as years of 'interruptions to overseas trade'.<sup>1349</sup>

The joint-stock arrangement took the Exeter merchants into new trading arrangements and also the Company was working here beyond the scope of its monopoly in the French trade. The ventures were discussed by MacCaffrey but further observations can be made.<sup>1350</sup> Of the five ships the 'Mary Martyn' was a Hurst ship and its owners are noted as being William Hurst, his grandson Thomas Martin and his former apprentice and factor, Simon Knight. The Exeter merchant Eustace Oliver was a half owner of the 'Michael' of Exeter. The other three ships were solely owned by Dartmouth or Exmouth traders.<sup>1351</sup> Twenty-six company members were involved in the joint-stock venture, the majority having their goods in three or more ships as shown in Table 6.5.<sup>1352</sup> The dominance of William Hurst within the Exeter merchant community is shown in the arrangements made for the venture. He shipped 43 tons in five ships, considerably more than most of the merchants, 17 of whom shipped less than 10 tons. Only Simon Knight (35 tons) shipped anything approaching Hurst's tonnage and Eustace Oliver (shipping 20 tons) was the next most significant investor. Knight was rapidly emerging as a key civic figure and was a central member of the Hurst group.<sup>1353</sup> Eustace Oliver was heavily involved as one of the ship-owners. The lowest tonnage shipped was by Andrew Jere who laded two tons in total on two of the ships. The long influence of William Hurst was still evident, less than two years before his death, the 'old guard' maintaining its dominance within the Exeter trading community. No information has been found about the success of the venture.

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<sup>1349</sup> Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, p.278.

<sup>1350</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.169-170.

<sup>1351</sup> The 'Margaret Carwythen' by Robert Carwythen of Dartmouth, the 'Christopher' of Dartmouth by John Prous of Dartmouth and the 'Bartholomew' of Exmouth by Robert Vynon of Exmouth.

<sup>1352</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.169-170. Robert Carwythan shipped 2 tons on the Margaret Carwythan of Kingswear.

<sup>1353</sup> DHC, ECA, Book 51 f.360a gives Hooker's mayoral biography which hints at the difficulties he was to face by 1580 when he was investigated by the Privy Council. He entered the Twenty Four in 1563, served as receiver in 1566, sheriff in 1569, mayor for the first time in 1570 and was elected as one of the city MP's in 1572.

## 6.8 Comparisons and Conclusions

Comparisons can be made with merchant guilds in other provincial towns, especially York, Bristol and Chester. In Bristol a charter granting trading monopolies to a merchant society was granted in 1552, in Chester in 1554 and in York to the reconstituted guild in 1581.<sup>1354</sup> The guilds in London served as an example, but were distinct from those in other towns, though a valuable study of them in the early Elizabethan period adds to our understanding of the merchant companies as a whole.<sup>1355</sup> The model of the London Merchant Adventurers in excluding all retailers and artisans from overseas trade was the goal of the provincial merchant companies. The Bristol and Chester companies were more resolute in seeking and gaining this. In Exeter the merchants tried initially to achieve this and also to exclude retailers and artisans from selling imported goods. Their attempt failed. They did not succeed in totally excluding non-members of the Company or artisans from the trade in the years before 1570. This was more comparable to York where retailers were not excluded from the trade, merchants had shops rather than being wholesalers and the new charter was gained a few decades later by the merchants. Even in Bristol the merchants were subject to the powers of the city government in the annual renewal of their corporate oath before the mayor and aldermen in just the same manner as the other guilds.<sup>1356</sup>

In the other provincial towns few merchants were members of the national societies. When a forced loan was raised by the London Merchant Adventurers only seven York merchants were members of the Company.<sup>1357</sup> In York in 11 years in the sixteenth century the master of the merchants' guild served as the city mayor in the same year, reinforcing the strong ties between the merchant guild and the city elite. In Exeter the mayor never served as governor of the Merchants' Company during his year of office, suggesting that the link between

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<sup>1354</sup> Palliser, *Tudor York*, especially pp.151, 160-61; M. Sellers, ed., *York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, Surtees Society, 129, 1918; Sacks, *Widening Gate*, especially pp. 85-101; D. Woodward, *The Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, Occasional Papers in Economic and Social History, No.4, University of Hull, 1970, especially pp.73-123.

<sup>1355</sup> I. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London*, Cambridge, 1991, pp.100-148.

<sup>1356</sup> Sacks, *Widening Gate*, pp. 96-99; Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, pp.73-75; Sellers, *York Mercers*, pp. lvii-lviii; Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.160.

<sup>1357</sup> Sellers, *York Mercers*, p.liv.

the council and the Company was not flaunted quite as blatantly to their contemporaries.<sup>1358</sup>

The York guild was one of merchants and mercers. There the terms merchant, mercer, grocer and chapman were virtually synonymous.<sup>1359</sup> Also there spicers, apothecaries and corn-chapmen were members of the guild. This is comparable to Exeter where various medical occupations and a bookbinder-stationer were involved. In York all the merchants were retailers as well as wholesalers. This was possibly the case in Exeter too. In 1564 York and Hull were exempted from the ban promoted by the Londoners to exclude retailers from the national Merchant Adventurers' company, though it has been concluded that it was unlikely that this restriction was enforced across the country.<sup>1360</sup> In Chester no member of the company was allowed to practise a manual occupation or sell by retail.<sup>1361</sup>

There is not much evidence that the Exeter Company served as a political or economic pressure group for its members in its early years, in the manner the Bristol company did, certainly after the dispute of 1558/59.<sup>1362</sup> Our understanding of its role, however, may be distorted as, after 1560, our major source is its court book. Nevertheless, the Exeter court book is fairly full in the range of business it records and the act books and letters for the city council seldom make reference to the Merchants' Company. In the following decades the political role of the Exeter Company increased.

Sacks has stressed that the merchant society in Bristol emerged from the crisis in the Spanish trade and the effects of the great debasement in England, which were major economic problems in the mid-century. By this time in the English provincial towns there was clearly a strong movement towards firmly defining the borders between merchant and artisan as well as between wholesale and retail functions. This is evident in Bristol a little earlier, in the late 1540s and early 1550s but was also a key issue in civic life in Exeter, York and Chester by

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<sup>1358</sup> Palliser, *Tudor York*, p.160.

<sup>1359</sup> Ibid., p.161.

<sup>1360</sup> Ibid., p.160; Sellers, *York Mercers*, p.lviii.

<sup>1361</sup> Woodward, *Trade of Elizabethan Chester*, p.7.

<sup>1362</sup> Sacks, *Widening Gate*, p.87, outlines the roles of the Society of Merchant Venturers in Bristol.

the late 1550s and early 1560s. In Exeter the merchants tried initially to severely limit the overseas trading and retailing activities of some of the principal artisans, though they did back down on these aims and in the early years failed to exercise a complete monopoly of the French trade, such a major part of the trade of the port. Exeter-based merchants continued to work alongside men from a wide range of other towns in its port in the late 1560s.

The Merchants' Company in Exeter came into being for a number of reasons. It contributed to, strengthened and consolidated the appearance of a widening social gulf. The Company provided a new exclusive organisation for the merchants. They had been working collaboratively on the canal project in the previous decades and the Company provided a more formal structure for this co-operation. The 1550s and 1560s were uncertain times economically and spreading mercantile risk was of importance, though the years of the greatest difficulties do not provide a clear causal factor for the new formation in Exeter. The time was one of growing debate about the roles of merchants and artisans in London and in the provincial towns and this also provided a key impetus. In Exeter there was clearly an attempt to stave off any challenge from the tailors and the other guilds and artisan groups who supported them. The merchants were trying to create a monopoly over the French trade, which was by far the largest part of the trade of the port, and wanted a structure to ensure a firm imposition of this. A strong influence and awareness of events and practice in London is very evident in Exeter's surviving historical sources for this time and this must have contributed a great deal. Ultimately the role of the mercantile 'old guard' headed by William Hurst must have been crucial in bringing about the new company as they sought to maintain their power and extend their control of the city and its trading.

Few Exeter traders became involved in the national merchant companies. The freemen group provided the city with an economic elite and they bound themselves together socially in the fraternity of St George, certainly from the 1480s up until the late 1530s. The high point of conflict between Exeter's occupational groups was probably in the period from the 1460s to the 1480s when resistance to mercantile domination was led by the tailors. However, by the late 1550s the attempts by the merchants to found an exclusive trading

company and especially to exclude the city's artisans from retailing and wholesaling goods imported from overseas, caused a new dispute. This was part of the wider conflicts which were occurring across the country between merchant and artisan groups which led to the formation, or re-formation of merchant companies in provincial towns.

The new Exeter Company was a small one, not even the largest of the city's guilds, but it was well structured and organised. It tried to distinguish itself from the city's craft guilds through the wealth of its membership, its charity and its ritual. The Company was formed by the city's established elite, members of the 'old guard' who were keen to defend their existing interests. Some of the leaders were very long-established traders and leaders in Exeter. Men like William Hurst and John Peter had enormous influence in the Company and were supported by whole groups of men who had served as their apprentices. The company tended to draw on its own Exeter ranks. A change was becoming evident by the mid-1560s as a new generation emerged. Few, if any, members were 'mere merchants' and Exeter traders were engaged in retail as well as wholesale activities. Some members were probably from the top ranks of the sole retailers who saw an advantage in being in the company. The Exeter Company tried to impose its monopoly over the French trade in the first decade of its existence but was never successful. Efforts to do this were sometimes costly and the city lost some traders, who were forced out due to their opposition to the monopoly.

There was, however, a small group of Exeter merchants who had a different view of economic developments, perhaps supporting the national efforts to disassociate wholesale merchants from retail, perhaps having a more adventurous attitude to trading by seeking out new markets. However, the Exeter traders remained strongly attached to their main overseas markets with France and, to a lesser extent, the Iberian trade and some profitable trading with the Low Countries. Anthony Thomas signed a petition to the Privy Council in December 1571 on behalf of the Exeter merchants which argued against the costs and dangers of direct trade with Guinea rather than simply trading with

Portugal.<sup>1363</sup> Their first real involvement in wider ventures was in supporting the Sir Humphrey Gilbert's Newfoundland venture in 1583.<sup>1364</sup> In 1570 a ship entered the port from 'Danske' (Danzig) and one from 'Indea' (probably the Portuguese 'Indies') but there is no evidence that the Exeter merchants were capitalising on these connections.<sup>1365</sup> The new company was much concerned with its financial status in its early years, which were times of economic uncertainty, as it sought to establish itself. It did offer its members security, as demonstrated in its monitoring of the 'average money' insurance payments and its first ventures into joint-stock operations. It was, however, acting as an arm of economic regulation in the city, in the same manner as the craft guilds. In the mid-1560s a new generation began to take charge of the Company but the process of change in Exeter was a slow one and full merchant dominance over the city was to reach its height a few decades later. The formal organisation of a company and its operation in the first years of Elizabeth's reign were, however, vital in consolidating a social and economic gulf between the merchants and artisans which was only to become wider as time progressed. Overall, the Company was not as grandiose as the presentation of it by Cotton, and also to an extent MacCaffrey, suggests. In its first decade its scope and dealings were not of the same scale as they were to become in the 1580s and 90s, the years on which these two studies particularly drew. Nevertheless, the foundation of an Exeter Merchant Company was to give the merchant group in the city new opportunities, and was to be a further vital phase in the re-establishment of oligarchical control within the city.

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<sup>1363</sup> TNA, SP 12/83/37 signed 'By me Anthony Thomas for the merchants of Exeter'; G.D. Ramsay, *The Queen's Merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands*, Manchester, 1986, pp.141-142. Anthony Thomas is not listed in the company membership lists in 1560 or 1570. He became a freeman in 1557/8, was assessed in St Mary Major on £30 worth of goods in 1577 and had an apprentice enter the freedom in 1568: *Tudor Exeter*, p. 61; *Exeter Freemen*, pp.82, 88.

<sup>1364</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp.171-172.

<sup>1365</sup> TNA, E190/927/7.

## CONCLUSION

Although the city archives are too extensive for one study, it is the very depth of their survival which has made this thesis possible along with the richness and quality of the material available. It has been valuable to successfully link the Exeter records with those in a range of other archive collections, especially the National Archives in London, in bringing together the study of documents from as wide a range as possible.

A major contribution of the thesis is the utilisation of previously under-used records such as the shop fines, the Tailors' guild records, the particulars of customs accounts and the Common Pleas material. This provides a wider view and a more linked multi-sourced approach, using local and national sources to examine Exeter's history than has previously been undertaken for this period.

The greatest challenge has been the amount of material which was available. Some of the sources were of considerable size, such as the particulars of customs accounts, and though transcripts were made for the analysis of them and various other records, sampling had to be undertaken. A limitation of the study is the lack of use of local court records compared to studies of some other towns. This is due to the amount of material available for Exeter. It has also been necessary to leave several themes out of the completed thesis in order to keep within the permitted word length.<sup>1366</sup>

This thesis fills the chronological gap in our knowledge of Exeter's history for the late fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries by drawing upon a wide range of extant sources for the years from 1470-1570. It provides a detailed examination of the merchants and leading artisans, particularly the tailors, for the first time. It also examines how a merchant oligarchy re-established its control over the city and what tools and agencies they used to assert their power.

Exeter was a more open community in the late fifteenth century when people with a range of occupations held more political and economic power in the city. This was evident in the composition of the city council, the membership of the city freedom and the standing of some of the trade guilds within the city,

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<sup>1366</sup> I have written, and delivered, papers which incorporate material not included in the thesis: Williams, 'Alien Community', 'Shop Fines', 'Trading Community' and 'Coastal Trade'.

especially the tailors. By the mid-sixteenth century a merchant-dominated elite was governing the city. It was composed of merchants and of the wealthy, but not one of families, as it was to become in the later Tudor period.

An elite re-emerged in Exeter which can be seen as fitting into the eventual 'triumph of oligarchy', after a period of debate in the towns, as argued by Rigby.<sup>1367</sup> This change was in progress in Exeter in the last decade of the late fifteenth and earliest decades of the sixteenth century when the city was expanding economically. It was further developing by the 1520s and had become far more established by the 1560s. This study confirms the impression of the relative size of the elite presented by MacCaffrey and Hoskins of about 6% of the taxed population. Exeter had some extensive merchant traders by the early sixteenth century but the profile of the trading community as a whole contained a large number of middling merchants too and the value of the goods they were importing and exporting had increased significantly by the mid-1550s.

This elite was not, however, as strong in its control of the city as the merchant oligarchy presented by Kowaleski in the late fourteenth century.<sup>1368</sup> Nor was the development a linear progression. Exeter's government and trade had been more broadly based in the latter part of the fifteenth century and leading artisans were of major economic importance. In Exeter the tailors unsuccessfully contested the merchants' hold on power by bidding for Crown support in the years from 1466 to 1482 and again in 1558/59. The cordwainers also attempted some opposition in 1531, but the surviving details of this are sparse.<sup>1369</sup> This supports Liddy's view that the existence of undisputed oligarchical control in the towns should not be accepted.<sup>1370</sup> The tailors' opposition may have begun as part of a wider contest in the English towns identified by Hartrich in the 1460s.<sup>1371</sup> The tailors' defeat in the 1550s, and the formation of the Merchants' Company, brought more secure merchant control.

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<sup>1367</sup> Rigby, 'Urban Oligarchy'; id. (with Ewan), 'Government'.

<sup>1368</sup> Kowaleski, *Local Markets*; id., 'Commercial Dominance'.

<sup>1369</sup> See 3.2.

<sup>1370</sup> Liddy, *Contesting the City*, p.217.

<sup>1371</sup> Hartrich, *Politics*, pp. 193-195. Hartrich identified 11 towns in the 1460s with at least one major outbreak of discord and included Exeter in this. She cites Hugh Germyn's disenfranchisement in 1468 as part of these disputes. Hartrich sees disputes arising from fiscal pressures in the towns. A fall in trade in the 1460s may have affected Exeter but this was beyond the scope of this research.



However, the Merchants' Company, formed in 1559, did not succeed in excluding non-members or artisans from overseas trade before 1570. Change was slow and the true re-emergence of a full merchant domination over the city came later in the century. In its first decades the Company was not as grandiose as presented by MacCaffrey and Cotton; this was to be more the case in the 1580s and 1590s. Our view of Exeter's merchants has been influenced by the work of Hoskins and MacCaffrey, both of whom based a good deal of their findings on the situation at the end of the Elizabethan period and early Stuart years.<sup>1372</sup> Their views have been projected back too much on to the early and mid-Tudor years when Exeter's elite was still not a strong and assertive one. The Company's foundation was, however, a key phase in the re-establishment of oligarchical control within the city. Its officialdom was mostly the city's council in another role. The real social differentiation between merchants and artisans in Exeter had, however, begun to develop before the disputes surrounding its foundation.

A major challenge was only presented by the tailors, who were consistently the next most important and successful guild and occupation in Exeter. Exeter's tailors have not been examined in detail before. This study draws on the previously largely unused records of the Tailors' guild. Relatively few collections of guild records survive for provincial towns in this period. The importance of Exeter's tailors in the city's history is demonstrated. Their guild records suggest that the working body of master tailors in the city probably doubled between the 1480s and the 1560s. They were a more dynamic group in the late fifteenth century up to the 1520s but they were less significant citizens even before their final challenge in 1558/59. Economic regulation became their primary concern. The guilds were under the tutelage of the city council before the Elizabethan era but the guilds had more than just a policing role controlling the labour force as the agencies of the city authorities, as Swanson argues guilds did in some towns.<sup>1373</sup> The tailors acted independently of the city council but their records do not suggest their voice was as strong in Exeter as Liddy argues the guilds were in some towns.<sup>1374</sup> Politically they were another aspect of Exeter life which came under the increasing control of the merchant dominated elite. However, a

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<sup>1372</sup> Hoskins, 'Elizabethan Merchants'; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*.

<sup>1373</sup> Swanson, 'Illusion of Economic Structure'.

<sup>1374</sup> Liddy, *Contesting the City*, pp.137-141, 214-219.

few leading tailor-draper, such as Thomas Hunt and Griffin Ameredith, were of more political stature having clients across the county and close links with Devon gentry families such as the Carews.<sup>1375</sup> The contrasting fortunes of the merchants and the tailors serve to exemplify the extent to which divisions were widening between the merchants and the other craftsmen in the city. The study of the tailors has offers a different perspective on Exeter's history as a view from a craft and not just an elite perspective from the top of the city government. The official view of the elite is largely what is recorded in the city's archive.

This thesis supports Phythian-Adams' view of Exeter as an unambiguous example of urban success.<sup>1376</sup> This rested not only on the expansion of its overseas trade but also on the efforts of a wide and successful middling artisan group. There was a substantial middling group in Exeter, which was probably larger than MacCaffrey's 'middle class' of 20% and possibly larger than Hoskins' calculations of a third. This was a vital factor in explaining Exeter's prosperity. Exeter may not have been a typical Tudor town given that, unlike say Bristol, it did not experience major economic pressures.<sup>1377</sup>

This thesis also shows that Exeter's political history was not a straightforward early move towards the merchant dominated hierarchy. Its political development was more complex. It must not be assumed that because Exeter was one of the best examples of an economically successful town at the time the city necessarily came earlier and indisputably under the grip of the merchants. Some of the means used by the elite to assert control such as the system of shop fines, the city freedom, and the controls over institutions such as the guilds are explored here in detail.

A further contribution has been to establish fully the role of traders from other towns especially Topsham, Tiverton, and Taunton in the creation of Exeter's economic success. Alongside the well-known figures of Exeter's trading history, especially William Hurst, the centrality of the economic role of men from other

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<sup>1375</sup> Sir Peter Carew lodged with Thomas Hunt whilst he was at school in Exeter. Later Hunt held property from the Carews in All Hallows on the Walls. The Champernownes were also Hunt's clients. In a Chancery case Ameredith was designated as a gentleman and servant to Sir Peter Carew and surveyor of his lands. MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp, 212, 221; J.A. Wagner, *The Devon Gentleman: The Life of Sir Peter Carew*, Hull, 1998, pp.29-30; TNA, C1/1215/28. On Hunt's trading network see Appendix 18.

<sup>1376</sup> Phythian-Adams, *Desolation*, p.18.

<sup>1377</sup> Fleming, *Time, Space and Power*, <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/OutputFile/924989>

towns such as Thomas Mongey, Richard Parkhouse and Roger Hyll must now be acknowledged. The thesis develops further the arguments initially put forward by Carus Wilson that the city's boom was inextricably linked with that of the cloth industry in East Devon and West Somerset in particular.<sup>1378</sup>

This thesis goes beyond the study of the tailors to consider the trades and crafts which made up the freemen ranks and those who were paying shop fines so offering a more rounded picture of Exeter's trading community. It confirms the vital importance of the distributive trades within Exeter's developing economy. It also identifies more guild activity in Exeter than had previously been supposed and it is likely that the cordwainers in particular were more active than the records have revealed.

.A number of further aspects could be explored in the future. In the National Archives some investigations were conducted within the records of the High Court of Admiralty. They have been used less by sixteenth century historians than those of later periods and more material on the Exeter traders could be discovered within them. In Exeter a study of the Mayor's Court rolls would be useful. My original aim was to investigate this source further but this proved to be beyond the scope of the present research.<sup>1379</sup> A further development could be that a full database created from my card-index based research which would facilitate further types of analysis. More research could be undertaken on Topsham, to add to that I have carried out, to put the Exeter's trade more fully within the context of the port. The answers to some questions probably lie in the history of Topsham.<sup>1380</sup> The survival of a range of historical records concerning the tailors makes them a profitable artisan group to study in Exeter and future research could be undertaken into the history of the guild beyond 1570.<sup>1381</sup> Further comparisons of lay and ecclesiastical wealth in the city are possible for 1522 and they could be fitted within the history of the Church and churchmen in

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<sup>1378</sup> Carus Wilson, *Expansion of Exeter*.

<sup>1379</sup> One was sampled for 1521/22 to provide linkage with the Military Survey and others were used to identify city officials but much more material is available within them. They are fuller for the years down to 1465, after which they are in the same form until 1533, when Mayor's Court Books were introduced. The records are voluminous as Kowaleski has noted, *Local Markets*, p.338.

<sup>1380</sup> Such as the absence of coopers in Exeter and more probably on the port workers, to which occasional references survive. More could be added from my research on Topsham ship-owners.

<sup>1381</sup> Stephens, *Seventeenth-Century Exeter*, pp. 76-77, 146 provides a very brief outline of the fortunes of the Tailors' guild in the seventeenth century.

Exeter, politically and economically, to establish a wider picture of the city at this time. However, this thesis fills much in the chronological gap in our knowledge of Exeter's history for the late fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries by linking and analysing a wide range of historical records.